



Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
April 2 - 10, 2014

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Tanya Tagaq Owns Fusebox Music

Inuit throat singer reanimates *Nanook of the North*

By [Raoul Hernandez](#), 11:57AM, Fri. Apr. 3

South By Southwest sets the annual agenda and we spend the rest of every year catching up with the Festival breakouts. Perhaps no woman other than Aussie spitfire Courtney Barnett netted instant conversion like [Tanya Tagaq](#), a contemporary throat singer from the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. Thursday night at Fusebox Music, she encored locally.



Filling every seat of the deep, long Stateside at the Paramount, Tagaq buzzed the daylights out of day two of the [mind-bending Austin arts festival](#), whose programming remains gratis.

“If just 10 percent of attendees contributed \$25, it would ensure free programming for the rest of the festival,” winked Fusebox’s cherubic Executive & Artistic Director, Ron Berry, who verged on giddy in his introduction of the program. He knew, too. Tagaq slayed.

Providing a live soundtrack to 1922 silent film *Nanook of the North*, widely considered the first narrative documentary, the singer began the performance by explaining her blood ties to the Inuits onscreen. (“Life was so hard for my ancestors.”) Controversial still today for staged sequences, the work – commissioned in this multimedia format by the Toronto International Film Festival – unspools as authentic today as an honest-to-God snowstorm.

The Polaris Prize-winning host rubbed her belly before commencing, loving on our barbecue but not so much the climate.

“It gets 40 degrees hotter here?” she exclaimed. “Don’t put an Eskimo in Austin!”

This one melted local hearts and minds.

Flanked by a drummer and fiddler, Tagaq sat on the floor under the screen with monitors in front of her as ancient footage of an Eskimo family struggling for survival near the polar cap flickered above her. Slowly sounds rose from her throat in time to the percussive heartbeat to her right and arterial sawing on her left. Her lungs expanded and contracted both.

Out of her guttural hum soon began hyperventilation and cries of ecstasy punctuated by sounds of spirit possession. During one fishing sequence, the trio’s tribal thunder rolled Tagaq’s eyes white as she rocked back and forth in place and craned her neck upward to allow whatever moved through her to escape. Drama not melodrama boomed with every crescendo from the band.

At the base of it all was Tagaq’s wordless call and response, siren here, savior there, demon in-between. Carnal, erotic one moment – charged by her shamanistic charisma – she feigned crying the next, clutching her hair and clawing the air. Her phonetic hooks latched onto a vocal thrust that could sound like a combustion engine.

Her ferocity during a dog fight sequence rippled through the full house like a stadium doing the wave.

When Nanook spears a seal through the ice, Tagaq’s vocalization of the death struggle culminated in explosive yells. As the hunters skin it, gut it, the dogs revert back to wolves, snarling and snapping. Tagaq went lupine. Rather than a physical, lycanthropic transformation, however, her aural embodiment of the moment was terrifyingly real.

A lullaby coo for igloo commingling pitted against an asthmatic rasp to represent the dogs outside in a storm, the killing of a walrus – scene after scene penetrated movie lovers through their eardrums as Tagaq unknowingly reanimated late, great Austin free jazz queen Tina Marsh, who howled the same screen gem as part of the Alamo Drafthouse’s silent film/live local score series a decade ago.

Hard to imagine *Nanook of the North* and Tanya Tagaq without one another going forward. The film explains her core being and artistry, and she brings back to life an almost 100-year-old landmark. *Owns it*.

Direct Link: <http://www.austinchronicle.com/daily/music/2015-04-03/tanya-tagaq-owns-fusebox-music/>

Actor an inspiration to Walpole Island community

By [David Gough](#), QMI Agency

Friday, April 3, 2015 1:03:24 EDT PM



First Nations actor Adam Beach talks to the Walpole Island First Nations community at an event held at Walpole Island Elementary School on Thursday, April 3, 2015. Beach spent the entire day on Walpole Island and Wallaceburg talking to students and later the community about his career and the challenges he has had to overcome. DAVID GOUGH/COURIER PRESS/QMI AGENCY

WALPOLE ISLAND – It was a whirlwind visit for First Nations actor Adam Beach.

Beach spent about 14 hours on Thursday meeting with students and the Walpole Island community.

He has played roles on the big screen in *Smoke Signals*, *Windtalkers*, *Flags of our Fathers*, and on the TV series *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* and *Arctic Air*.

On Walpole Island he's a legend and an inspiration.

Beach spent the morning talking with students at Wallaceburg District Secondary School and the afternoon at Walpole Island Elementary School.

In the evening, the community turned out in large numbers for a meal where Beach spoke and took part in a question-and-answer session.

He then stayed and signed autographs and posed for pictures, as a long line snaked around the WIES gymnasium waiting to spend a little time with beach.

Steve Tooshkenig, the Walpole Island First Nation youth co-ordinator, said they went to the First Nations students at WDSS and asked who they would like to have visit.

Tooshkenig said Beach was requested by the students.

“They gave us a bunch of ideas and I said, ‘You know what, I will give Adam a call and see what he’s up to,’” Tooshkenig said.

“He said, ‘Absolutely, what day and what are we going to talk about?’”

Beach talked about his life story and how it relates to kids today, as well as social media and how young people have the power to change society with their phones.

“But also that they have creativity to make those changes,” Tooshkenig said.

A troubled childhood saw Beach’s mother killed by a drunk driver, and his alcoholic father drowned only weeks afterward.

Tooshkenig said Beach told students that if they go through traumatic times it’s possible to go on and help people.

“This is how he does it. He goes and visits communities and says I made it to a level of success because I believed in other people and I trusted them,” Tooshkenig said.

Beach is a busy and in-demand actor. He said he’s working with Stan Lee on a project about a Native American superhero.

“By the summer I will know where (the project is at) with the writing,” Beach said.

He is also working on a number of other movie and television projects, including a role in Joe Dirt 2.

The well-known actor and producer from Manitoba recently opened the Adam Beach film institute in Winnipeg.

Beach said he wants to change things and ruffle some feathers in the movie and television production industry. He said he foresees the day when he will create an independent production company in every First Nations reservation in Canada.

This was not Beach’s first time in the area. He visited WDSS and WIES in 2010.

A number of partners helped in getting Beach to Walpole Island and Wallaceburg, including the Bkejwanong youth facility, Walpole Island employment and training, WDSS and Ontario Works.

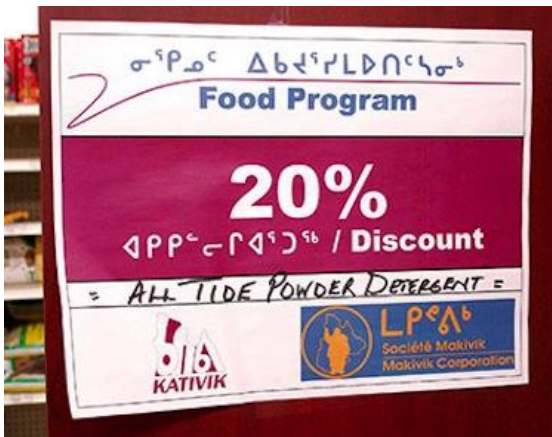
Direct Link: <http://www.chathamdailynews.ca/2015/04/03/actor-an-inspiration-to-walpole-island-community>

Aboriginal Community Development

New measures to offset Nunavik's high cost-of-living start April 1

Now clothing, footwear sold locally qualify for 30-per cent subsidy

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, April 01, 2015 – 3:09 pm



Nunavik residents have seen signs like this one for years in local stores, but now the program to reduce the high cost of living in the region is expanding as of April 1. (FILE PHOTO)

If you go out to buy a pair of boots or a new jacket in Nunavik, you'll notice that these items are cheaper as of today.

The drop in the prices of clothed and footwear is no April Fool's joke.

That's because, as of April 1, four cost-of-living programs in Nunavik have improved support for the region's most disadvantaged, the Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corp said in a joint April 1 news release.

The new and improved programs will also target healthy lifestyles which take into consideration Inuit traditional activities and culture, the news release said.

Among the major improvements cited: a new 30 per cent subsidy for clothing and footwear purchased from participating local stores under the "Food and Other Essentials Program," as well as a new transportation subsidy for hunting and fishing equipment that need repairs.

"Subsistence harvesting continues to provide an essential source of food to Inuit households," said Makivik's president Jobie Tukkiapik in the release. "This new

transportation subsidy for repairs will help harvesters keep their complex, modern equipment in safe working order.”

The “Food and Other Essentials Program,” which already offered discounts between 20 per cent and 40 per cent for more than 1,500 commonly purchased food, personal care and household products, will now include clothing and footwear which will receive a 30 per cent discount when bought in Nunavik.

Co-op stores and Northern stores in every Nunavik community, plus Newviq’vi in Kuujuaq, are participating in this program.

“While the KRG and Makivik continue to work hard to collect the data needed to negotiate with Quebec on effective and long-term solutions to the region’s high cost of living, the new subsidy for clothing and footwear will provide real and meaningful support to Nunavik families,” KRG chairperson Maggie Emudluk said in the release.

The household appliance and harvesting equipment program will help offset costs for shipping snowmobiles, outboard motors and all-terrain vehicles south for repairs and cover return shipping north for up to one return shipment annually.

As well, snowmobile trailers and ice augers now appear on the revised list of equipment eligible for a purchase subsidy.

The annual maximum amount under the household appliances and furniture program has been increased from \$1,050 to \$1,750. Sewing machines now appear on the list of eligible items.

And for the country food community support program, there’s an additional \$250,000. The new money means each community’s allocation will include a \$10,000 base amount plus an additional amount set according to the size of the local Inuit population.

Complete descriptions of program can be found [here](#).

Quebec provides the money for Nunavik’s various cost-of-living measures under an agreement [signed with Makivik and the KRG in 2013](#).

Under this agreement, Quebec committed \$33 million for these measures over three years.

The agreement also includes an in-depth study of the consumer patterns of Nunavimmiut by Laval university researchers to develop a comparative cost of living index.

The results of this two-year study will be used to define effective and long-lasting solutions to the cost-of-living in Nunavik, the release said.

Nunavik's cost-of-living measures are determined jointly by the Makivik and the KRG, with the KRG responsible for administering the implementation of the measures.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674new_measures_to_offset_nunaviks_high_cost-of-living_start_april_1/

Expert raps aboriginal welfare cuts

TOM AYERS CAPE BRETON BUREAU

Published April 3, 2015 – 7:58pm

Last Updated April 3, 2015 – 8:09pm

SYDNEY — Reducing on-reserve welfare payments to bring rates in line with provincial social assistance programs is not the best way to encourage people to gain meaningful employment, says a retired social work professor.

Fred Wien, a former Dalhousie professor and one-time deputy director of research for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, said the federal government's plan to change First Nation welfare rates to match provincial rates doesn't properly take into account the differences between reserves and other communities.

While Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq have asked the Supreme Court of Canada to rule on the proposed federal change, Wien is working on a federally funded research project to help Nova Scotia aboriginals design and run their own social assistance programs.

"I don't think it's an easy thing to do this, to design a Mi'kmaq approach, because inevitably there isn't enough money and you have to tackle difficult questions," he said.

"For example, how do you set it up so that on the one hand, people on assistance are supported adequately, while not setting it up in such a way that there's a disincentive to get off social assistance and become self-reliant.

"You have to think about not only what's suitable for persons on social assistance, but how do you build in incentives so that it doesn't become a long-term dependency."

Wien said according to figures compiled three years ago, a single adult on-reserve receives a welfare payment of \$97.73 every two weeks, while an off-reserve single adult receives \$105.40.

However, there are several other supplements reserve residents receive that aren't available to people on provincial social assistance.

For example, he said, reserve residents may qualify for an additional \$51 every two weeks for household supplies and food. They can also qualify for relief on utilities and other goods and services that non-reserve residents do not.

For decades, Ottawa has provided on-reserve social assistance on a comparable basis to that received off-reserve, he said.

But in 2011, Ottawa began moving to make the rates match exactly. Wien said it could be seen as one way to get reserve residents off welfare.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada declined to comment on the policy proposal while it is before the courts.

Maritime aboriginal leaders are asking the Supreme Court to rule against the plan. Naomi Metallic, a lawyer with Burchells LLP in Halifax who is representing the Mi'kmaq, said the policy change could cut welfare payments on-reserve by as much as 50 per cent.

Wien said that would not be fair, because reserves are not like other communities.

“It’s fair to say that a community like Indian Brook, or Pictou Landing, or whatever, Wagmatcook, on social and economic matters is significantly different than the town of Whycocomagh or Digby, or any of the provincial towns,” he said.

“It has to do with housing conditions and crowding and age of population and greater levels of poverty and unemployment. These are all the kinds of things that you should take into account when you’re designing a social policy.

“The difficulty I have with the federal position is that they’re trying to tightly squeeze reserve communities into a provincial policy that was not designed with them in mind and is not appropriate to on-reserve conditions.”

This summer, Wien expects to conduct interviews with Mi'kmaq elders across the province to gather information on how First Nations traditionally looked after their people, as part of the planning process for a social assistance program designed for aboriginal communities.

“I think they know best what’s suitable for their communities and I really don’t think it works to cram the communities into the provincial model, which was designed for a different population entirely.”

Direct Link: <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1278693-expert-raps-aboriginal-welfare-cuts>

Mistissini mourns loss of five members of Cree nation in cabin fire: 'They were good buddies to everyone here'

[Christopher Curtis, Postmedia News](#) | April 4, 2015 | Last Updated: Apr 4 2:12 PM ET

Mistissini, Que. — It was just after lunch Wednesday when Reverend George Westgate got a knock at his door.

Five local men had set out on a moose hunt the previous week, driving their snowmobiles deep into the Boreal forest and hunkering down in a log cabin by Bussy Lake in northern Quebec. Now, a full 24 hours after they were due back, no one in the Cree nation of Mistissini had seen or heard from them.

Soon the news reached local police, who boarded a bush plane that took them from the shores of Lake Mistissini toward the cabin some 200 kilometres north. A group gathered by the docks on the edge of town, waiting for the search party to return.



Mistissini residents Steven Wapachee, Harry Blacksmith and Clarence Rabbitskin walk back to their truck on a road just outside the Cree village north of Montreal, Friday April 3, 2015.

That's when one of the missing men's relatives decided to pay Rev. Westgate a visit.

"[The relative] asked if I could come back to the point and wait for the plane with them," said Rev. Westgate, the minister at Mistissini's Anglican Church. "When the plane came back, we were told the cabin had burned to the ground and all five [snowmobiles] were accounted for.

“Then they said there were three [human] remains that they could see in the wreckage,” he said. “They said they assumed the others were there as well. ... It was like the community had been in a boxing match, like they were all punched in the stomach and the air just went out.”

It was like the community had been in a boxing match, like they were all punched in the stomach and the air just went out

On Thursday provincial police confirmed all five were dead. David Jimiken, Emmett Coonishish, Chiiwetin Coonishish, Kevin Loon and police officer Charlie Gunner had all died in an accidental cabin fire. Local authorities called a community meeting that day and asked that relatives of the deceased submit blood and DNA samples to identify their remains.

News of their death has shaken the people of Mistissini, a reserve about 800 kilometres north of Montreal, and reverberated throughout the Cree Nation. Friends and relatives of the five men made the trek from neighbouring First Nations and cities, driving hours through heavy snowfall Thursday night to attend church services the following day.

“It will take a long time for us to heal,” said Clarence Rabbit Skin, a local mechanic who knew the victims. “They were good buddies to everyone here. It’s like a big family, this place, and we’ve just lost five family members.”



Kathleen gunner, left, Jimmy Gunner and Beatrice Gunner, right, the mother, father and sister respectively of late police officer Charlie Gunner, at the parents' home in Mistissini.

Rev. Westgate and priests from two other churches cancelled Good Friday services, opting instead to hold a multi-faith remembrance ceremony at the local Anglican Church. Baptisms and other Easter celebrations were also put on hold, while the people of Mistissini grieve.

Tiffany Gunner might have been one of the last people to see the victims before they died. They stopped at the local Esso gas station last week to fuel their trucks and pick up a few snacks as they headed out to Bussy Lake.

“I didn’t know them personally but I saw them around and they were all nice guys,” she said. “It’s hard to think that it was the last time I would ever see them again.”

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/mistissini-cree-nation-cabin-fire-deaths-734155>

Warmth and beauty of Mistissini unbowed in aftermath of deadly fire

[Christopher Curtis, Montreal Gazette](#)

Published on: April 6, 2015

Last Updated: April 6, 2015 12:36 PM EDT



A child runs past Voyageur Memorial High School in Mistissini, a Cree village north of Montreal, Saturday, April 4, 2015, as flags fly at half staff to honour the five men from the village who perished earlier in the week in a cabin fire north of the village.

Phil Carpenter / Montreal Gazette

A snowmobile rumbled across Mistissini Bridge on Saturday afternoon, pulling a red sleigh packed with tools.

As the machine drew closer, we could see a boy sitting between the driver’s legs. They waved at us before disappearing into the blinding white snowfields and over the horizon.

The morning after a memorial service for the five hunters who died in a cabin fire north of Mistissini, life in the Cree village has taken on some semblance of a routine. People filed in and out of the grocery store on Main St., making last-minute purchases for the Easter Sunday feast. Children played in snow banks while others rode all-terrain vehicles on a cold but beautiful Saturday in the heart of Quebec's boreal forest.

Of course, the wound is still fresh for the friends and families of David Jimiken, Emmett Coonishish, Chiiwetin Coonishish, Kevin Loon and local police officer Charlie Gunner.

Flags outside the local schools and band council offices continued to fly at half staff on our last day in Mistissini. A search party had just returned from the site of the fatal fire, a five-hour trek into the woods on a road that only snowmobiles can navigate.

The searchers returned the victims' snowmobiles and tried to preserve whatever moose meat could still be harvested from the hunt. Even in the midst of such a devastating loss for the community, it would be wasteful to let a wild animal die in vain.

There's also the matter of identifying the men's remains. Medical examiners are collecting blood and DNA samples from the victims' family members in hopes of identifying their bodies — which were burned beyond recognition.

Finally, funerals arrangements will have to be made. Police from across Quebec are expected to attend a service for Charlie Gunner — who was awarded the Medal of Bravery in 2013 after being shot in the line of duty.



Mistissini residents attend a memorial service in the Cree village north of Montreal, Friday, April 3, 2015, for the five hunters from the village who perished in a cabin fire on Thursday.

What's lost in this harrowing story is what a beautiful place Mistissini is. When my colleague Phil Carpenter and I arrived in the First Nation last Friday, we were welcomed with open arms. People who knew the deceased let us into their homes, they greeted us with a smile and the occasional joke. It seemed important for them, even as they were overcome with grief, to make two strangers feel at ease in their home. They knew we'd

be asking difficult questions, that we'd be using our cameras and recorders to capture this terrible day. But they let us in anyway.

This story — the one about the beautiful, thriving aboriginal community — isn't one we tell a lot in popular culture. If a news article or an editorial has the words "First Nation" in it, odds are you'll read about unspeakable poverty, underfunded schools, missing and murdered aboriginal women or maybe a protest movement. These are critical stories and ones that don't get the attention they deserve in mainstream media.

That doesn't give you the full picture, however.

The people of Mistissini struggle with many of the problems that plague other isolated communities. About one in four adults suffer from diabetes, unemployment rates are twice the provincial average and the town is still healing from many of Canada's assimilationist policies (like thousands of aboriginal kids across the nation, Cree children were snatched from Mistissini in the 1960s and forced into residential schools).



Snowmobilers travel along a street in Mistissini, a Cree village north of Montreal, Saturday, April 4, 2015.

But when we visited the Cree territory this weekend, Carpenter and I didn't see a community throwing its arms up. Instead there was a sense of perseverance, of a people who can maintain traditional practices like hunting, trapping and a mastery of the Cree language while facing the challenges of the outside world.

If you look to the vacant hills across the newly constructed Mistissini Bridge — a \$12-million project funded as a partnership project between Quebec and the Cree village — a new development is emerging. The site will soon see homes built to accommodate the reserve's growing population. There are large families in Mistissini, but they aren't packed into small, dilapidated shacks as is often the case on other reserves.

Now, in fairness, the Quebec and Canadian government has — often against its own will — had to negotiate with the James Bay Cree on something of an equal playing field. The hulking rivers that flow through Cree territory feed the hydroelectric dams that power our cities. Out of sheer necessity, our governments have made concessions that allow for levels of self-government and revenue sharing rarely seen in their dealings with Canada's aboriginal peoples. This, of course, has come at a cost for the Cree, who've seen swaths of their traditional territory flooded and destroyed to make way for dam construction. But in spite of these losses, the James Bay Cree have guaranteed certain rights for themselves. They've proved a partnership between Canada and its First Nations can work if given a chance.

Compare their situation to, say, the [Atikamekw of Opitciwan](#) — another isolated Quebec First Nation. Unemployment rates in Opitciwan are nearly 10 times what they are nationwide, some four-bedroom bungalows house as many as 14 people, and rising crime rates have overwhelmed the local police force.

The distinction between these communities is a fairly basic one. Everything we needed to take from the Atikamekw has already been taken. Their territory was flooded twice during construction of the Gouin Reservoir dam and the once-thriving logging industry is in the midst of a decades-long slump. They've never been fairly remunerated for the flooding and despite a federal audit calling for an increase in funding to police and social programs, movement on both these files advances at a snail's pace.

And so the question becomes: how are the Atikamekw any different than the Cree? They're both hard-working, smart, resourceful people with a love of the land and their traditional languages and practices. The difference is we need electricity from the Cree and their land while, it seems, we can afford to ignore what happens in the far reaches of Atikamekw territory.

I had the chance to visit Opitciwan nearly two years ago and despite the serious social problems the community faces, my colleague and I were welcomed into people's homes, we were invited over for dinner and treated like guests instead of strangers. Come to think of it, I can't remember a time where I visited a First Nation and wasn't greeted with a smile, a warm handshake and a joke.

But that story hasn't made it in the newspaper yet.

Direct Link: <http://montrealgazette.com/opinion/warmth-and-beauty-of-mistissini-unbowed-in-aftermath-of-deadly-fire>

Inuit in the city: Ottawa org launches tour to assess services

Tungasuvvingat Inuit to visit five cities, count people and find gaps

LISA GREGOIRE, April 07, 2015 - 7:57 am



Jason Leblanc, an Inuk from Nunatsiavut and executive director of the Ottawa-based service and cultural agency Tungasuvvingat Inuit, will lead a tour of five southern cities this spring and summer to meet with local Inuit, identify what services and programs are needed and help them access federal money. (PHOTO BY LISA GREGOIRE)

OTTAWA — With an increasing number of Inuit leaving their home towns to live in the South, cities such as Ottawa, Winnipeg and Montreal are being asked to provide more tailor-made services and opportunities for Inuit.

And Tungasuvvingat Inuit, a Ottawa-based provincial social service and cultural agency, is leading a new study in five Canadian cities to find out who's living there, what they need most and how to help local groups provide those services.

“Part of this work is enumeration,” said Jason LeBlanc, TI's executive director.

“It's really looking at the stats we get from Stats Canada versus the reality and then connecting with municipalities. At the end of the day, Inuit are residents of municipalities and they're entitled to certain services.”

The timing of the project, called “Increasing Urban Inuit Participation in the Economy,” is ideal.

It's been exactly 10 years since TI did their [first survey of urban Inuit in southern Canada](#).

That one was called “National Urban Inuit — One Voice.”

This 2005 survey, and subsequent gathering in Ottawa, was meant to raise awareness around an often ignored portion of Canada's Inuit population, to gain more recognition

for urban Inuit from the federal government and to figure out how best to carve out the Inuit share of federal money earmarked for Aboriginal programs.

Statistics Canada's 2001 census said there were at least 5,000 Inuit living outside traditional Inuit territories in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut. At the time, those southern Inuit comprised about 10 percent of the total Inuit population in Canada.

The 2006 census found that about [one in five, or 22 per cent, of Inuit](#) live outside their land claim settlement areas.

Today, LeBlanc estimates about 30 per cent of Inuit may live outside Inuit Nunangat regions, based on various reports and surveys, which could mean as many as 15,000 southern Inuit or more.

He said Ontario is probably home — at least temporarily — to about 5,000 Inuit, with about half of them in Ottawa alone.

But numbers are hard to pin down which is why TI will try to get a current, accurate picture of the southern Inuit community.

“Government moves to pressure,” he added. “You can have all the good ideas in the world, but if you can't say that enough people need it, it doesn't stick.”

LeBlanc will be visiting Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and St. John's and will combine what he learns with what he knows about Ottawa.

Toronto is a new addition to the Inuit circuit, he said. Numbers are suggesting Canada's largest city is starting to attract Inuit newcomers.

In each city, LeBlanc plans to meet with stakeholders, community groups and individuals to find out what services, if any, are currently offered and identify gaps in areas such as education, health, language, employment and other social needs.

This coming fall, TI plans to hold a gathering in Ottawa to bring together those service providers and other participants to present and validate a national report and to strategize on how to access federal money for Inuit-specific urban programs and services.

LeBlanc is hoping to create a national urban Inuit strategy that can then be “strengthened with federal and provincial partners,” he said in his funding proposal to AANDC.

After that, TI plans to continue working with groups in those cities to help them get programs up and running and hopefully grow Inuit participation in the economy.

In the past, urban Inuit have been the poor cousins in the funding mix because of larger numbers of urban First Nations and Metis. The Friendship Centre model works well as a

one-stop shop for First Nations peoples, but it doesn't cater to Inuit needs with Inuktitut services.

In fact, many Inuit in the cities rank high among their Aboriginal peers when it comes to poverty, mental illness, addiction and education needs, LeBlanc said. So you can't just look at numbers anyway.

"There's a danger in saying, there's only so many people here without the full context of that," LeBlanc said. "It's fair to say that our numbers may be small, but the vast majority of our clients come with extensive and multiple areas of support needed in light of the environment they're leaving."

LeBlanc, who grew up in Nunatsiavut, plans to begin the city tour in May and June with money TI got from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

An April 2010 [study published by the Environics Institute](#) said that among Canada's Aboriginal population, Inuit comprised the smallest "urbanized" number.

And those who do live in southern cities are newcomers, it said.

Nearly nine out of 10 Inuit surveyed were first generation urban residents. They were also most likely to feel a close connection to their home community with, "plans to return there permanently one day," the study said.

Only 11 per cent of Inuit surveyed were second generation urban dwellers and about one per cent identified as third generation.

This relatively "new arrival" status likely contributes to a lack of services beyond Canada's largest urban populations, in Ottawa, Yellowknife and Montreal.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit_in_the_city_ottawa_org_launches_tour_to_assess_services/

Northern Manitoba highway has dubious distinction as province's worst road in poll

[Ian Graham](#) / Thompson Citizen
April 9, 2015 11:00 AM



Provincial highway 280 to Split Lake and Gillam, seen here during a blockade by members of Tataskewiyak Cree Nation near Split Lake last August, is currently in top spot in CAA Manitoba's online poll about the worst roads in Manitoba. Photograph By Melanie Spence

A gravel highway that provides the only road link to Northern Manitoba communities Split Lake and Gillam is currently sitting in top spot in CAA Manitoba's annual list of the province's worst roads.

PR 280, which runs northeast from PR 391 and was blockaded by members of Tataskewiyak Cree Nation at Split Lake demanding repairs and improvements last August, has knocked Winnipeg's St. James Street out of top spot for the first time since 2013 midway through the four-week-long online campaign, which has received more than 3,000 votes for 400 different roads in Manitoba so far.

"Looking at some of the pictures and videos sent to us from Manitobans, it's no wonder why this road is in the top spot," says Angèle Young, public and government affairs specialist for CAA Manitoba. "Hundreds of people have joined the conversation about this road and the desperate need to get it fixed, as it is a lifeline for many."

Horror stories shared by users of the highway on CAA Manitoba's Facebook page tell tales of washouts, stone chips and muddy conditions that are even difficult for four-wheel drive vehicles. As the only road linking Thompson to Split Lake and Manitoba Hydro's Keeyask Generating station project, PR 280 is used heavily by large trucks as well as passenger vehicles.

Votes for the province's worst road are being accepted until April 22 at www.caamanitoba.com/worstroads, which also includes photos of some of the top 10 contenders, six of which are in Winnipeg. Voters can only vote for a road once but can vote for as many roads as they'd like. Besides potholes and drivability, traffic congestion and cycling safety are among reasons some roads are picked, Young says.

PR 280 is scheduled to receive \$28 million worth of improvements cost-shared by the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro. Following last summer's blockade, NDP Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Eric Robinson said planning would begin immediately with the goal of starting that roadwork within 12 months.

See more at: <http://www.thompsoncitizen.net/news/nickel-belt/northern-manitoba-highway-has-dubious-distinction-as-province-s-worst-road-in-poll-1.1818484#sthash.egoEBKdq.dpuf>

Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement

Veteran Nunavut prosecutor bids farewell to the court

**“The criminal justice system is struggling along and
could use a re-think”**

THOMAS ROHNER, April 01, 2015 – 1:57 pm



Paul Bychok, set to retire from a 30-year career in public service April 2, sits inside Iqaluit's Grind and Brew Café a week before his retirement, doing what those who know him have come to expect: telling stories — with passion, intelligence, humour and empathy.

Between sips of coffee and passing greetings to friends and acquaintances, Bychok, who has worked as a Crown prosecutor in Nunavut for a dozen years, explains his family's reaction shortly after making Iqaluit their home in December 2003.

“It was a very quick realization that we had come to another culture’s land,” Bychok said.

Back then, Bychok attended the annual Christmas games at Iqaluit’s Anglican Parish Hall with his wife, Linda Ham, and his two daughters, Kira and Anika, then aged seven and nine.

It was obvious that, of the 200 or 300 participants, his family counted among only a dozen or so non-Inuit.

“There we were, in a totally different society, and yet we were still in Canada, were still at home,” Bychok said, smiling. “We could’ve been anywhere else in the world, because we were not at home.”

Their experiences after that, and the friends they’ve made, have changed his family forever.

“Linda and I feel really privileged and lucky that we were able to bring up our daughters in Nunavut. They had an exposure to a culture and a set of traditions which, at their very essence, are not only healthy but life-giving,” he said.

But Bychok’s privilege came with a heavy responsibility as a Crown prosecutor.

Until Inuit came in off the land, Bychok said, they had their own way of dealing with the same issues that are now addressed at the criminal court.

“So to be really responsive and responsible, it was incumbent on me to try to temper and fashion whatever I was doing on behalf of the Crown, to make it understandable to Inuit, and to try to incorporate whatever traditional mechanisms might’ve been used to deal with the same kinds of issues.”

To that end, Bychok relied heavily on Inuit witness co-ordinators employed by the Crown. One in particular, Elisapee Angnatsiak, was sensationalized over the last dozen years.

Angnatsiak, who recently passed away after more than 20 years as a federal public servant, served as a cultural bridge between Bychok and the Inuit he served.

As a personal friend and colleague, Angnatsiak embodied the best of Nunavut to Bychok: “She never sought praise or attention. She went about her job quietly. She was extremely conscientious and hardworking.”

“If you don’t have that type of relationship, you’re not going to survive doing what we do up here very long,” Bychok said.

“And she wasn’t in the slightest way resentful that here I was, another Qallunaat, flying in and out of communities.”

Angnatsiak ensatio with Bychok on his first circuit court in 2004. Speaking at his retirement dinner March 14 at Iqaluit's Arctic Hotel, Bychok said that trip neatly summed up his career in Nunavut.

For example, after getting everything organized for 10 a.m. on the first day of court in Arviat, court staff waited until nearly 11 a.m. before the first person scheduled on the docket showed up.

"That was my first experience with 'Nunavut time'," Bychok told the 35 or so people who attended the dinner, including local lawyers and judges.

After leaving Arviat for Repulse Bay, a blizzard hit, which made for an interesting flight.

"The plane somehow manages to hit the tarmac, but then skids sideways all the way down the runway," Bychok laughed.

But Bychok has never shied away from the complexities and challenges of Nunavut life.

With Angnatsiak's help, Bychok prosecuted "at least a half dozen" homicide cases in the territory, including high profile cases like Silas Ammaklak, Bruce Kayaitok and Chris Bishop.

Colleagues who spoke at Bychok's retirement dinner commented on the man's dedication to supporting and consoling families and witnesses in each case.

He spent his first years as a Crown prosecutor in Nova Scotia and in the beginning, was embedded with the RCMP as a prosecutor in Operation Hope — a massive investigation into allegations of systemic sexual abuse at Nova Scotia's youth detention facilities from the 1950s to the 1980s.

At the same time, Bychok prosecuted Cesar Lalo, whom he described as "Nova Scotia's [Ed Horne](#)," referring to the notorious pedophile teacher who taught in Baffin and Nunavik in the 1970s and 1980s.

But after three years with Operation Hope, Bychok started showing signs of vicarious trauma, which forced him to quit.

Careers in foreign service, as a diplomat, and in teaching tempted Bychok, but eventually he settled on becoming a prosecutor.

"I have always believed passionately in what I do," Bychok said in a speech at his retirement dinner.

And that passion led him to push those around him: colleagues, police, defence counsel, even judges. That hasn't changed as he approaches retirement.

“The criminal justice system is struggling along and could use a re-think,” Bychok said at the Grind and Brew.

Court dockets are dominated by domestic and sexual violence, he added, the vast majority of which are alcohol-fuelled.

That’s hasn’t changed over the past dozen years, he said.

The unitary court system in Nunavut — combining the territorial and superior court — has not worked, he said.

It’s overloaded. A robust Justice of the Peace system could help by dealing with lesser criminal charges, Bychok said.

The territory also needs a coordinated domestic violence strategy “that recognizes the importance of early resolution,” as well as substance abuse treatment facilities, mental health workers and safe houses in each community.

Wellness courts is an idea whose time in Nunavut has come, he added, and the revitalization of local justice committees could bring traditional Inuit knowledge and values in closer contact with the justice system.

But for local justice committees to flourish, community leaders must take on more responsibility, he said.

“People who have the experience and knowledge and care about their communities — and our hamlets are full of people like that — they need to force themselves out of their own comfort zones and to take on leadership responsibilities.”

Though he’s still full of ideas, Bychok appears ready for a break.

“The two emotions I’m feeling right now are satisfaction and relief,” he said.

“Satisfaction because I did the best job I could. No matter what the results may have been, I did try to be fair and to do my best. And relief because being a career prosecutor is not for the faint-hearted.”

Bychok said he plans to stay in Iqaluit for at least the next few years, and to be active in the community — just as he’s always been.

“But I need a good long rest. For the next six months or so, I’m going to be focusing on taking care of myself.”

Direct Link: <http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674long-time-nunavut-prosecutor-bids-farewell-to-the-court/>

'We have a martyr in heaven': The murder of Father Gilbert Dasna

It was a series of events that left the town of St. Paul stunned. Last spring, a beloved priest was murdered by a man angry with God and with life, a man who went on to bait police in a gunfight before killing himself. How could it happen, and why?

By Jana G. Pruden, Edmonton Journal April 5, 2015

Editor's note: This story is based on RCMP documents and evidence, including accounts of events given in recorded interviews with RCMP officers and witnesses, as well as crime scene and evidence photos, the RCMP's final report into the case, visits to the crime scenes, news reports from the time, and new research and interviews. John Quadros's wife, son and sister did not respond to interview requests.

The two men met in the doorway of the town's oldest building, a two-storey house built in 1896 for Oblate priests working in what was then St. Paul de Métis.

Father Gilbert Dasna and John Carlos Quadros had each emigrated from a world away, and now lived half a block apart from each other; Quadros in the private residence above the health food store he owned with his family, Dasna in the historic church rectory.

It was May 9, 2014, the third anniversary of Dasna's arrival in Canada.

In many ways, the two men were very similar. Each was a man of commanding presence and fierce passion, of deep spiritual conviction. Each had also known great pain.

Dasna opened the door of the yellow rectory house just before 6 p.m.

Quadros shot him five times, then jumped into his son's big black truck and sped away, leaving the priest alone and bleeding, fumbling with his phone to call for help.

EDMONTON – Gatsou Gilbert Dasna was born in the village of Lainde-Garoua in the central African republic of Cameroon on Feb. 28, 1982, four days after the start of Lent. He was the third child and second son in a deeply religious family.

Orphaned at a young age, he was raised by his sister until he left home at 17 and emigrated to Nigeria to join the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy, a Catholic order devoted to the mother of Jesus.

Dasna was ordained a priest in 2009, and taught at a congregation school in Nigeria for just over a year before being sent to St. Paul, Alta., a bilingual diocese about 200 kilometres northeast of Edmonton.

Meeting Dasna for the first time, St. Paul's bishop Paul Terrio was immediately struck by the young priest's sincerity and compassion, and his desire to serve his new community.

"Out of the experience of not having very much as a boy and as a child, living with limited resources and then with the loss of the parents, I think there was a very spiritual response in his life," Terrio says. "He realized he didn't have much to give, but there was a great joy in giving what he had."

Dasna did well as associate pastor of the cathedral in St. Paul and, toward the end of 2012, Terrio asked if he would become the pastor of churches at two nearby First Nations, Goodfish Lake and Saddle Lake. Dasna immediately said yes.

"You're coming from another background, culture and tradition, so there's all kind of adjustment issues, and those are not always easy," Terrio warned. "There are difficulties and challenges."

Dasna replied, "Oh, but Bishop Paul, I'm ready to give my life for my people."

Patsy Hysell had seen many priests come and go from the Sacred Heart church at Saddle Lake but she soon realized there was something very different about Dasna. He was 32, young for a priest, and his physical appearance cut a striking figure on the reserve: reed-thin, with very dark, almost blue-black skin, and dressed in the gleaming white, ankle-length cassock of his order.

Dasna started appearing regularly in Saddle Lake just before Easter 2013, and Hysell remembers him arriving on Good Friday that year to do the Way of the Cross with parishioners. It was a biting cold day and the walk was an eight-kilometre hike from the old cemetery to the church, on the reserve's sloppy, rutted, thawing roads. Hysell looked at Dasna's long, white robe, and told him he didn't need to join them.

"I thought, 'Man, you're going to be all muddy and it's going to be horrible,' " she remembers. "And he said, 'No, I'm going to walk with you.'"

"And I think that's when the community really saw him as one of us. Because he didn't separate himself. He didn't hide in St. Paul or out of the community. He was always here."



Photo: Father Gilbert Dasna, in white, leads the Way of the Cross on the Saddle Lake First Nation on Good Friday in 2014.

Dasna started visiting people in their homes, blessing houses, bringing communion to those who were too old or sick to attend mass. He also agreed to do funerals in the community hall, something many other priests refused to do, even though the church was often too small to accommodate a funeral turnout.

“Lots of people left the Catholic faith because priests wouldn’t go into the hall, because it wasn’t the church,” Hysell says. “They wouldn’t make concessions for the differences in culture. But from him, there was no hesitation.”

Fluent in English and French, Dasna started learning to sing hymns and pray in Cree, and told Hysell he eventually wanted to do masses and gospel in the people’s traditional language. When she told him not every one on the reserve could speak Cree, he said, “Then we can all learn together.”

Dasna could be funny and goofy. He liked to tease his Canadian friends by disappearing into the darkness of a shadow, then emerging, white teeth shining with a broad grin.

In the pulpit, parishioners say Dasna was transformed. His voice swelled with power, and though Hysell’s husband, Greg, always turned the microphone down, Dasna’s voice reached every corner of the church. His homilies were so good the nuns in St. Paul said he should publish them in a book. The Sacred Heart congregation, which had at times dwindled to just a handful of people, started growing steadily. Soon there were 10 people in the pews, then 20. Then 50.

“It was almost like he drew them in,” Hysell says. “And I don’t think it was just about him being the kind of priest he was. It was about him accepting. He didn’t care if you didn’t have money to put in the collection. He didn’t care if you wore sweats to church. He just accepted.”

Dasna ate with the parishioners, sharing feasts of bannock, wild duck and rabbit soup, something no priest had done on the reserve for a very long time.

Even from the outside, the deep and growing connection between Dasna and the First Nations communities was striking. Bishop Paul Terrio says he could tell how happy Dasna was to be there, and how happy the communities were to have him.

“The communication flowed both ways, from him to them and them to him,” Terrio says. “It was a beautiful story.”

Dasna said the poverty, addiction and homelessness he saw on the First Nation reminded him of home, and he related to the people’s hurt and pain. He saw many similarities between African and First Nations culture and music.

Hysell recalls him saying he wanted to stay at their church. He told her, “This is my home. These are my people.”

Early in 2014, Dasna’s sister, Jeannette Horbaita, died suddenly in a car crash in Africa. A nun with the Soeurs du St. Esprit in Cameroon, she had been on her way to visit a sick nun in another village when she was killed.

Dasna returned to Africa for a month, arriving back in Alberta not long before Easter 2014. His sister had raised him after his parents’ deaths, and though he was obviously grieving deeply, the Hysells knew he was trying not to show it.

“Even in his own tragedies, he insisted on being strong for everyone else,” Greg Hysell says. “With Father Gilbert, it was always everybody else comes first, no matter what the story.”

Patsy Hysell adds, “Like he wasn’t as important as everybody else in the world.”

Before long, Dasna had started calling her “mom,” and Greg Hysell had come to consider him like a best friend or a brother. Dasna spoke to them multiple times a day. Practising the Litany of the Saints for a service, he called and sang it to them over the phone until he had it right.

Whenever she had trouble, he was there, telling her to pray and to have faith.

He would tell her, “I’m your son. I’ll never leave you. I’m here.”

John Carlos Quadros was an imposing man, over six feet tall and 200 pounds, with a military air about him. At 55, he had closely shorn silver hair, a moustache, and piercing blue-green eyes. On his right arm was a tattoo of an eagle.

Born in Portugal, Quadros moved to Canada when he was 12. As an adult, he worked as a helicopter mechanic in B.C. before moving to St. Paul in the late 1990s with his wife and their two young children, to run a small health food store in a house on 50th Avenue.

Health Mart 2000 Ltd. Reflected the couple's strong religious beliefs, and its website advocated optimal health through "using Herbs and Natural products given to us by GOD, as our inheret (sic) right as his adopted children."

The store did a good business, though some customers found John Quadros to be cold, rude, or openly hostile. He was known to have cycled through various churches in the community, and he sometimes baited people into discussion of religion and scripture.



Photo: John Carlos Quadros.

"He had that thing, that edge on him, hey?" former customer Peter Cherrett would later tell the RCMP. "That edge. Always pushing."

Some in St. Paul had glimpses of a temper that lay just below the surface. On one occasion, RCMP were called to the Peavey Mart when Quadros became agitated after refusing to give his postal code to the checkout clerk.

Quadros had a handful of encounters with RCMP over the years, but they were all relatively minor, and he had no criminal record. The most serious incident involved an altercation with a teenage boy after Quadros became upset because he believed his teenage daughter had been drinking. (By the time of the shootings, she had moved out of the family home.) Quadros himself turned to the RCMP for assistance several times, reporting mischief around his store or a suspicious person in the area. Once, he called RCMP to ask for advice on parenting teenagers.

Quadros had several licensed firearms, including two restricted handguns, and kept what RCMP described as a “survival preparation pantry,” with gas masks, canned goods, water and bulletproof vests. His son told RCMP he was worried about the possibility of war and fire.

But the greatest threats were internal and took place within the Quadros family home. Speaking to investigators after his death, his family described a man who could be volatile and menacing, who would yell and swear, and pressure them with threats to get what he wanted.

“He comes across too hard. Very strifeful. Always strifeful,” Wendy Quadros told RCMP. “How do you explain that about a person who is always in strife about everything? I don’t know. He’s always been this way with me. All of his life he’s been this way.”

“What made him so upset?” the officer asked.

“Anything,” she said. “That’s the sad part.”

Quadros’ family told RCMP his childhood was abusive and traumatic, and that he had once watched his father break his mother’s arm.

“He used to tell me stories about how his dad would threaten to kill his mom in front of him and stuff like that, how he would beat him up for no reason,” his 18-year-old son Luke told police the day after the shootings. “It was messed up. I don’t know if that had anything to do with how he is, but it probably does.”

He was also hospitalized once; according to Wendy, Quadros had gone to a psychiatrist afterward and was on medication, but stopped taking it. By May 2014, she said he hadn’t slept in six months.

Still, his family said they knew he loved them deeply and they tried to help him as much as they could. They told police he told them often that if he ever lost them or the business, he would kill himself by getting police to shoot him.

On those days, Wendy would leave town for the day and come home after he had calmed down.

“It always works,” she told an RCMP officer after the shootings. “This time it didn’t.”

On the afternoon of Friday, May 9, 2014, a woman shopping in the Health Mart noticed Quadros didn’t seem as helpful as he usually was and she thought his behaviour seemed odd. She later told police that after she made her purchases, he asked her if she was Catholic. She said she was.

“I used to be,” he told her. “But I’m not anymore.”

As the woman left, she noticed he was starting to close the store, though it wasn't closing time. Another customer who phoned the store around that time would later tell police that Quadros said the store was going out of business and that there would be a sale in about a week.



Photo: This surveillance photo from May 9, 2014, shows John Carlos Quadros leaving the building where lived and worked at around 5:02 p.m.

Quadros left the building at 5:02 p.m., a hulking figure recorded on one of his own surveillance cameras. He wore black boots and mismatched socks, a black nylon jacket, and a bulletproof vest. He carried several firearms, including a Ruger handgun and a double-barrelled shotgun, and his bags and pockets were filled with ammunition and money.

On the counter inside the house, he left a rambling note about slavery and freedom.

RCMP Cpl. James Morton, and constables Shane Visser and Guy LaPointe were standing outside the St. Paul RCMP detachment around 6 p.m. that Friday, chatting in the spring sunshine, when they heard a series of sharp bangs coming from around the west side of the building. It sounded like gunfire.

Running around the side of the building, Morton saw a black Dodge Ram truck, shiny and lifted, with oversized tires and tinted windows. The driver waited for a moment, then sped away.

While the officers rushed into their cars and took off in search of the truck, calls started coming in to 911 from people who had seen the man shooting at the detachment building or were concerned about the truck speeding recklessly through town.

At the same time, another call came through to 911. In moaning breaths, a man said he had been shot in the chest. It was not yet clear how, or even if, the shooting was related to the chase.

Const. Tammy Protasiwich was on the highway just outside St. Paul when she heard a dispatch about the man shooting at the RCMP detachment. She turned on the lights and sirens on her police truck and raced toward town.

"I'm hit! I'm hit!" Visser's voice came over the radio. "He's got a shotgun. He opened fire on my car."

It was a busy evening in St. Paul, and along 50th Avenue, the town's broad main street, people were going for dinner and shopping.

Georgette Lafreniere was heading out to dinner with her granddaughter when the black truck raced by her with its window open. Lafreniere worried the driver was going to kill somebody, so pulled over to call police, then saw that RCMP officers were already in pursuit.

The shooter initially drove away from the busy downtown, but circled around as the officers closed in on him and headed back toward the centre of town.

Approaching from the other direction, Protasiwich saw with alarm the amount of civilian traffic in the area, knowing that people on the street had no idea what was coming. In a second, she made the decision to pull her police truck into the middle of the intersection at 48 Street and 50th Avenue. Traffic stopped around her as she had expected, and briefly she felt relieved. Then she heard the sound of an engine accelerating, and realized the black truck was driving toward her. For a moment, her eyes locked with the driver's. Protasiwich would swear she could see his eyes bulge.

"You could see it in his expression," she later told an investigator doing a review of the incident. "I knew he was coming for me."

In the slow-motion moments before impact, she tried to put the vehicle in reverse to back away, but it was too late. She told herself to relax, to go with it. She put a hand up. A white flash, glass and metal flying. A cloud of dust rising in the air.

Protasiwich tried to reach for her police radio, but it wasn't where it was supposed to be. Looking down, she saw that her legs were in the wrong place, too. She realized she was pinned inside her truck, and couldn't move.

"MVC MVC MVC right here!" one of the officers said over the radio.

"I'm hurt, guys," Protasiwich radioed. "I need help, guys."

In another police truck, Morton skidded up to the scene at an angle behind the shooter's truck. Its tinted windows made it hard to see inside, so it wasn't clear if the shooter had been hurt or killed in the crash.

Then, Morton saw the barrel of a shotgun coming out the driver's side window. It was aimed directly at him.

Morton leaned right as far as he could in his police truck, straining over the equipment mounted in the centre of the vehicle, trying to duck as far as possible behind the dash. The first shot fired at him sent a spray of glass into his face. At that moment, Morton was pretty sure he wasn't going to get back up.

From his own police car, LaPointe saw the black barrel of the gun and heard the boom of the gunshot.

“I didn’t know if he killed Cpl. Morton or not,” he later told investigators. “But one thing I was sure of is, if we don’t stop that now, if I don’t stop that now, he’s going to kill everyone. Including me.”

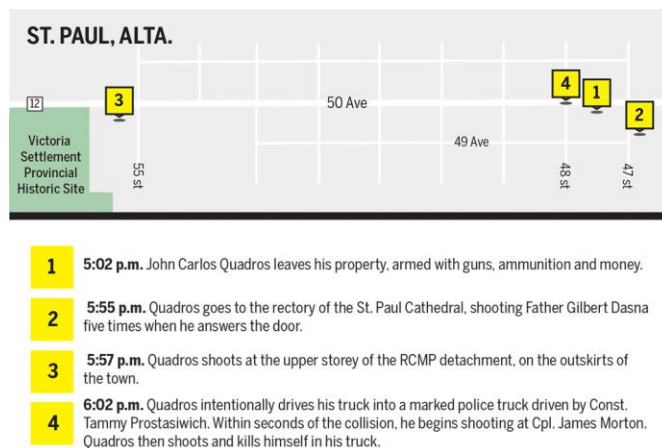
With his gun drawn, LaPointe ran behind his police car for cover. Then he aimed his gun toward the driver’s seat of the black truck, and pulled the trigger.

For a moment, the rapid-fire pop and bang of gunshots filled the intersection. And then, less than a minute later, it was quiet.

Morton slowly raised his head. At least two of the shots fired at him had hit his windshield, and one bullet had gone out the back window, in line with the place where his head would have been.

A security guard motioned from the street that the man in the truck had killed himself.

Morton and LaPointe approached the truck together, guns drawn, ready to shoot. Together, they hauled the body of John Carlos Quadros out of the truck, handcuffing him tightly in case there was any chance he was still alive. There was a single bullet hole in his right temple.



[Interactive: Click for an interactive map of the St. Paul shootings](#)

Barely a block away, Father Gilbert Dasna lay in the doorway of the rectory, struggling for breath. Police and an ambulance were on their way. The 911 dispatcher told him to lie still, to stay calm. She told him he didn’t have to speak.

“I can still hear you,” she told him. “I am still here with you.”

Through the open line, she could hear the approaching sirens. She promised him help was coming.

“You hear those sirens?” she asked him. “They’re coming to help you. It’s not going to be long now.”

RCMP Const. Dave Henry found Dasna halfway through the doorway of the rectory building, lying on his back, wearing pants and a shirt but no shoes. Henry didn’t see bullet holes around the doorway, but when he pulled off Dasna’s shirt he saw the wounds on his chest, the blood trickling down along the side of his head.

Henry had been a medic for 10 years before joining the RCMP, and he used gauze from a first aid kit to try to staunch the bleeding as much as possible until the ambulance arrived.

Dasna looked up.

“Please save me,” he said.

“We’re going to,” Henry told him. “The best we can. The ambulance is on its way. Hang in there.”

But soon his eyes rolled back and he didn’t seem to be breathing anymore.

Around 6:30 p.m., Wendy and Luke Quadros were driving home when they saw Luke’s truck smashed up in the intersection surrounded by emergency vehicles and police cars.

It had been less than an hour since John Quadros fired the first shots at the door of the rectory. The shooting had unfolded in barely seven minutes, beginning to end. Sirens still sounded in the distance.

Officers James Morton and Shane Visser were being treated for minor injuries; Visser had a bullet wound to his hand and Morton had cuts on his face from the broken glass. When emergency crews were finally able to free Tammy Protasiwich, she was airlifted to hospital in Edmonton with serious injuries to her legs.

It was 6:43 p.m. when an RCMP officer spoke to Quadros’ wife and son. Wendy told the officer that she and her husband had an argument the day earlier. Quadros had been angry about cooking rice, and that it had grown and ensatio after that into screaming, threats and ultimatums.

“This was an argument about the rice?” the officer asked her.

“You don’t think it really was, do you?” Wendy answered. “It’s not about flesh and blood.”

She told him, “This is all spiritual.”

Bishop Paul Terrio was in Rome attending meetings when he got a text message. It read, “Urgent. Call home. Father Dasna has been shot. He is dead.”

Terrio had been standing up from the breakfast table when he saw the words and he sat back into his seat with the weight of them.

Patsy Hysell was at home in Saddle Lake updating the church's Facebook page, when she saw a post about a shooting near the cathedral in St. Paul. The rectory was right beside the cathedral and she immediately thought of Dasna. She phoned him right away, and when he didn't answer, she started to panic. Hysell tried his line again and again, calling and texting, then phoned every one else she could think of. It was after 7 p.m. by the time one of the priests finally answered the phone and told her Dasna was dead.

She was standing outside between her house and the church when her mother, Irene Samson, arrived. Hysell told her, "Father was killed. Somebody killed Father."

"Why would they kill him? Why would they kill a priest?" her mother asked.

They led Samson into the church, and sat her on a pew in front. There, the 78-year-old suddenly turned quiet and pale, and her breathing became laboured. Those around her recognized she was having a heart attack and called an ambulance.

At the hospital in St. Paul, Patsy Hysell noticed an RCMP officer guarding a closed door and she knew Dasna's body was there, too.

Hysell's mother was taken to hospital in Edmonton by plane. There a doctor told her, "You had a broken heart." When they could find no permanent damage, she would believe Dasna had fixed it again.

Dasna's funeral filled the cathedral in St. Paul. There were priests who had ensatio from Cameroon, and others from around Alberta and Canada. There were members of his parishes on Saddle Lake and Goodfish Lake, from the cathedral, and others from town. Hysell remembers men weeping and how people were embracing strangers; First Nations, African, French, all together.



Photo: A photo of Father Gilbert Dasna hangs in the entrance of Sacred Heart Church on the Saddle Lake First Nation reserve.

“There was no division,” she says. “God’s honest truth is that there is division every day, in everything, but there wasn’t that day.” She looks at a picture her grandson made, a photograph of Dasna, surrounded by a circle of different coloured hands. “That’s why I think those hands are the way they are,” she says.

As the coffin was being carried out, the priests reached out to touch it, and spontaneously began to sing the Salve Regina, an ancient hymn asking Mary to come and take Dasna and welcome him into the next life. For that moment, Terrio says, it was like “being suspended between here and where we are all going.”

An RCMP investigation into the shooting found no indication that Gilbert Dasna and John Quadros knew each other, or had ever even seen each other before. It is possible Quadros had attended one of the priest’s services in St. Paul or that Dasna had gone into the health food store, but if there had been any kind of meeting or interaction between the two men, neither mentioned it. People in Quadros’s life told RCMP investigators of a perceived slight by a member of the church several years earlier, but it had nothing to do with Dasna.

St. Paul Bishop Paul Terrio says it’s especially unlikely that Dasna was specifically targeted, because he spent most of his time on the First Nations reserves and didn’t usually answer the door of the rectory in town even if he was there. Instead, Terrio says he believes Dasna was murdered as a symbol by a man suffering his own profound, internal struggle.

“There was obviously great stress and hurt in that man’s life and he became an aggressor and lashed out,” Terrio says. “He was very angry at God, it appears. It was not personal. Father Gilbert was not a personal enemy. It could have been Father Gerard Gauthier that answered the door. I think any clergyman at that time would have been shot at by John Quadros. And then he obviously was angry at the civil authorities, the police.”



Photo: Bishop Paul Terrio outside St. Paul's Cathedral in St. Paul.

At Dasna's funeral, Terrio ensured prayers were said for Quadros, too.

Gauthier, the priest who lived with Dasna and usually answered the door of the rectory, said later that he believed Dasna "took the bullet for me."

Responding to a memorial message about Dasna by the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy, Gauthier wrote, "We have a martyr in heaven, but I would have preferred to have Father Gilbert here with us."

Almost a year later, the closet doors have been replaced inside the historic St. Paul rectory and there is a large mismatched section of carpet in an area that had been stained with blood. Two bullet holes in the walls have been patched but the patches are rough and unsanded, marking the spots as much as hiding them. One is partially hidden by a leaning tapestry. Above the other hangs a black beaded rosary and a framed portrait of Dasna in his priest's collar.

Pastoral assistant Alice Corbiere worked closely with Dasna at the rectory for two years, and says she thought of him like a grandson. She says at first it was very difficult to work in the place where he was killed. But he was so happy and gentle that those feelings have now grown stronger than the bad memories. Instead, she remembers how he used to laugh and sing, filling the office with the hymns he learned as a child growing up in Africa.

Across from Corbiere's desk hangs a large photograph of Dasna in church. He is dressed in white and ivory robes decorated with a gold cross and a flying dove, radiant and smiling.

"He watches me all day long," she says. Her husband died fewer than three weeks after Dasna was killed, and having the picture of Dasna there has helped her through the difficult months.

"I just look at him, talk to him. I do ask him for help," she says. "It touches my heart."

The same picture hangs prominently at the entry of Sacred Heart church at Saddle Lake. The picture is bright and luminous and gives the impression, as the new priest working there once observed, that it is Dasna's church now.

Patsy Hysell says she looks at the picture every time she goes past and often stops at it to talk to Dasna or to pray.

"Everybody always says, 'What would Jesus do?' I always go, 'What would Father say to me? How would Father react?' I do a lot based on what he taught us, how he treated us," she says.

Sometimes when she stops at his picture, she chides him about the church's buckling roof, reminding him how he promised God would take care of it, though they still can't afford to have it fixed.

Other times, she is angry. He took so much with him when he left. She asks him, how could you leave us? You promised you would never leave.

But most times, when she looks up at the picture of Father Gilbert Dasna in his shimmering robes, she sees the face of love.

Direct Link:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/have+martyr+heaven+murder+Father+Gilbert+Dasna/10944193/story.html>

Court orders new trial for OPP officer acquitted of assault on First Nations man

Const. Brian Bellefeuille found not guilty after 2012 altercation in Greenstone, Ont. jail cell

By Jody Porter, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 08, 2015 6:00 AM ET Last Updated: Apr 08, 2015 10:10 AM ET



A new trial has been ordered for OPP Const. Brian Bellefeuille (right) who was found not guilty in 2013 of assaulting Gary Megan (left), of Aroland First Nation, in a Geraldton, Ont. jail cell.

The Ontario Superior Court has ordered a new trial in the case of an Aroland First Nation man who was thrown to the floor of a Greenstone, Ont., jail cell with his hands cuffed behind his back during an altercation with an OPP officer in 2012.

Const. Brian Bellefeuille was found not guilty in 2013 of assaulting Gary Megan.

The Crown appealed the decision and on April 7, Justice Terrence Platana ordered a new trial.

Platana ruled that..."a reasonable person would find that apprehension of bias was created by the judge's comments..."

That perception of bias was created at the trial during arguments about whether Megan had been lawfully arrested outside a Geraldton bar.

Bellefeuille told the court that Megan was so drunk that he was taken into custody for his own safety.

The Crown argued that police had other options for dealing with concerns about Megan's safety and suggested the police were targeting Megan because he had made an obscene gesture at a police car earlier that day.

Trial Judge Frank Sargent appeared reluctant to hear that argument, citing previous cases of First Nations people who had frozen to death; quoting headlines of articles about drunk people dying of hypothermia and asking the Crown ..."would it have been proper to let him walk, attempt to walk and freeze to death on the side of the road? I just want you to consider that."

The Crown referred to four other grounds for appeal in the case, but having ordered a new trial on the issue of bias, Justice Platana said it was unnecessary to determine the other issues. Platana then went on to say the trial judge made an error in not allowing cross-examination of Bellefeuille about his character.

By telling the court "I do not lie" and that he did not want a reputation for police brutality in the First Nations community which he belonged to through his mother, Platana said Bellefeuille put his own character up for scrutiny.

Bellefeuille has 30 days from the date of the ruling to appeal. If he doesn't appeal, the court will set a date for a new trial.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/court-orders-new-trial-for-opp-officer-acquitted-of-assault-on-first-nations-man-1.3023965>

Aboriginal teen fighting for her life after assault in Manitoba foster care

KATHRYN BLAZE CARLSON

Winnipeg — The Globe and Mail

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Last updated Monday, Apr. 06 2015, 10:16 PM EDT

Some of the swelling has gone down. Her nose is visible now, her eyes a little more so. The lids do not flutter, though, and her breathing is laboured.

The native teen is fighting for her life after an April 1 assault in downtown Winnipeg so violent that her family called in a minister to baptize her in the pediatric intensive-care unit.

The 15-year-old, whom The Globe and Mail is not identifying because she is the victim of a sexual assault and a minor in provincial care, is the unwitting catalyst for promises of swift change to Manitoba's emergency child-welfare system.

After it was revealed that the girl had been placed at a downtown hotel at the time of the attack, Family Services Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross publicly pledged to move all provincial wards out of hotels by June 1. The accused, a 15-year-old male who has not been publicly named because he is a minor, is also in foster care and had been placed at the same hotel.

Relatives say the girl is in a coma, unrecognizable even to those who know her well and are at her bedside – her mother, grandmother, older brother and great-aunt. The great-aunt, who said she is close with the wavy-haired teen, said she recently took a blanket to the church on her reserve to have it blessed and plans to lay it over her young niece.

“Who was looking after her?” asked the great-aunt, who said the girl had been placed at the Best Western Charter House a couple of months ago, after she started running away from her grandmother's North End home. “It's the worst thing that [Child and Family Services] could ever do, mixing up the girls and boys in a hotel.”

The April 1 attack is the second high-profile crime in eight months involving a native teen placed at the Winnipeg hotel. In August, 15-year-old Tina Fontaine was pulled from the city's Red River after going missing from the Best Western Charter House. Her death reignited calls for a national inquiry into Canada's murdered and missing indigenous women and put the province's child-welfare system under a microscope.

The Globe has been investigating the emergency-placement program since October and found evidence of prolonged hotel stays, questionable supervision and possible security concerns. The number of children and youth in hotels fluctuates daily, but at any given time there could be dozens of foster charges – mostly aboriginal – living in rented rooms.

The Winnipeg Police Service confirmed Monday the girl remains in critical condition but would not comment on the continuing investigation.

The great-aunt said the teen is aboriginal with familial roots on a reserve north of Winnipeg. She had a difficult upbringing in the city, but found solace in writing and music, her great-aunt said. She wrote sombre poetry and taped her work to the steel-grey walls of her small bedroom. Through a school program a couple of years ago, she took interest in the violin and would practise, eyes closed, on the back porch.

Her great-aunt said she would spoil the teen, letting her keep the change when she sent her out to get the morning newspaper, or tipping her for carrying her suitcase to the car after a visit. But the girl would dote on her great-aunt, too.

“I would be resting on the couch and I’d hear a voice say, ‘Aunty, do you need another blanket? Another pillow?’ I knew it was [her],” she recalled.

Last summer, though, the girl started running away. On one occasion, in the early morning hours of a frigid January night, she came home after walking alone in the dark from a friend’s house. “I tried to talk to her, and said, ‘What if someone grabs you?’” her great-aunt said. On another occasion, after the girl ran away for several days, her great-aunt travelled from her reserve into the city to help scour the streets. She did not find the girl; CFS did, she said, and placed her at the hotel.

The great-aunt said she is not convinced the government will fulfill its promise to remove foster charges from hotels within 60 days. In the meantime, she will pray for her niece’s recovery. “I love [her],” she said. “She’s a beautiful girl.”

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/aboriginal-teen-fighting-for-her-life-after-assault-in-manitoba-foster-care/article23818133/>

The media's responses to Jian Ghomeshi and John Furlong exposés are extraordinary

By
[Michael Stewart](#)
| April 9, 2015



In October 2014, independent journalist Jesse Brown with the assistance of the *Toronto Star* published anonymous allegations that CBC star radio host Jian Ghomeshi had

physically and sexually assaulted three women. Within a week, the number of anonymous women accusing Ghomeshi had grown to eight; by December, 15.

Ghomeshi, of course, was disgraced, fired and now faces five criminal charges from the Toronto Police.

Twenty-five months earlier, award-winning freelance journalist and author Laura Robinson, with the assistance of Vancouver's *Georgia Straight*, [published](#) allegations, backed by eight sworn affidavits, that the former CEO of the Vancouver Olympics, John Furlong, had physically and psychologically abused at least eight Aboriginal children while working as a physical education teacher in Burns Lake, B.C. Since then, over 45 people, all Aboriginal, have come forward alleging that they suffered or witnessed Furlong's abuse.

Almost two weeks ago, Furlong gave a press conference announcing that three individuals -- none of whom were included in Robinson's damning article -- had charges of sexual abuse against him dropped. Despite the fact that these criminal cases were completely unrelated to the allegations reported by Robinson, Furlong announced that [he felt "vindicated"](#) and dropped his defamation lawsuit against her.

The lack of skepticism in the Canadian media's reportage on this story is astonishing. Brown's *Canadaland* podcast has done [some excellent work](#) in castigating the media for absolving Furlong while parroting his slander and denigration of Robinson. Virtually every mainstream media outlet in the country repeated Furlong's interpretation of these events without deviation.

The Globe published an editorial by Gary Mason, who co-wrote Furlong's biography *Patriot Hearts*, titled "[Former Olympics CEO Furlong now in the clear, but the damage is done](#)." The *Vancouver Sun*, in an unsigned editorial, bellowed "[John Furlong's false accusers should suffer consequences](#)" and repeats Furlong's contention that his name should now be cleared. *Maclean's*, *The National Post*, *Huffington Post* all joined in the exoneration refrain.

It's hard to overstate this: *the dropped cases bear absolutely no relation to Robinson's story aside from the fact that they also accuse Furlong*. Indeed, even the dropped cases do not vindicate Furlong. They simply indicate that these questions will not be settled in a court of law. But to parrot Furlong's interpretation that the failure of two troubled individuals to show up in court proves that Robinson is an unethical journalist is appalling -- and yet no one in the Canadian corporate or legacy media bothered to make this distinction.

John Furlong is a liar. I don't know what happened in Burns Lake under Furlong's watch - but as Brown [says in a recent podcast](#) -- "I don't know how you get 45 people to make false allegations." We do know, however, that Furlong lied, on several occasions, about the date he came to Canada. He wilfully omitted his time at Burns Lake whenever he was asked to give biographical accounts. He claimed that Robinson approached the RCMP

with criminal allegations against him even though [he had no knowledge of that happening](#) (which, in fact, it did not). In a recent interview, Paul Wells admitted he had put "a little asterisk" next to Furlong's name in his head after hearing him misrepresent a heated encounter with a *La Presse* reporter during the Olympics.

Despite all of this, Furlong's career is on the road to a full recovery while Robinson, instead of plaudits for publishing a once-in-a-lifetime story, sees her career in tatters. The different responses by the Canadian media to Brown's exposé of Ghomeshi and Robinson's of Furlong are nothing short of extraordinary.

What do we make of Canada's embrace of Brown's exposé and its exile of Robinson's? The victims of the alleged abuses seems like a good starting point. In the [original *Star* article](#) on Ghomeshi, Brown and Investigative Bureau Chief Kevin Donovan referred to Ghomeshi's victims as "educated and employed" (words which caused Brown later [to express some regret](#)). Furlong's alleged victims are all Aboriginal. [As Robinson herself puts it:](#)

In terms of physical and physiological abuse, whether it was to them or they witnessed it. Way over 45 [people] now. You know, that's more than two hockey teams. And I have to ask Canadians: if two white hockey teams said a coach had physically and psychologically abused them, I think we might believe them. And I think what Canadians need to ask themselves is, why when First Nations people allege psychological and physical abuse -- why aren't they believed?

And what of the reporters? Jesse Brown had a reputation as the gadfly of Canada's media establishment long before he broke the Ghomeshi story. Yet even as he grew into his role as unofficial ombudsperson-cum-muckraker of Canadian journalism, those who found his style grating still managed to criticize him [with a whiff of admiration](#).

Not so for [Laura Robinson](#). Despite groundbreaking sports journalism, six books to her credit (including a 2011 Silver Medal from the ALA), and an honorary doctorate from York University, Robinson's freelance career has "dried up, almost completely."

Furlong's unsubstantiated and frequently misleading accusations of Robinson have been routinely republished in newspapers across the country without comment. While Ghomeshi's protestations that the *Star* exposé was the result of a "jilted ex" and a spiteful reporter were roundly condemned, Furlong's almost identical and endlessly repeated defence -- that Robinson is "malicious" and bears a "personal vendetta" -- has been almost universally and uncritically accepted.

What, then, if the reporter who exposed Ghomeshi's serial abuses had been a woman? Or his victims Aboriginal? With the unreported, unprosecuted and uninvestigated Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women epidemic currently facing Canada, I suppose we already know the answer, don't we?

Last night, [John Furlong spoke at the BC Maritime Employers' Association 50th Anniversary Gala](#). Furlong can command as much as \$25,000 for a speaking gig. He [sits on the board for a junior gold mining corporation](#) and is the chair of the [Rocky Mountaineer's board of directors](#). He is the Executive Chair of the Vancouver Whitecaps Football Club.

Robinson was paid \$2500 for her original 2012 article with *The Straight* -- and has spent well over \$250,000 researching and defending it in court. She has a [crowdsourced website](#) funding her legal defence and countersuits against Furlong.

It should go without saying that Robinson's remarkable story ought to have raised questions over Furlong's received narrative, if not suspended his participation in public life until these allegations had time to breathe.

Instead, Canada's legacy media clamoured to the defence of a good ol' Canadian boy and ensured that the woman who challenged the status quo was punished.

Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/michael-stewart/2015/04/medias-responses-to-jian-ghomeshi-and-john-furlong-expos%C3%A9s-ar>

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Manitoba First Nations are going to hire their own children's advocate

By: Jessica Botelho-Urbanski

Posted: 04/3/2015 4:38 PM | [Comments: 63](#) | Last Modified: 04/3/2015 9:41 PM | [Updates](#)



Manitoba Grand Chief Derek Nepinak says the new advocate would be more flexible and transparent than the government's Children's Advocate.

Two days after an attack left a teenage girl who was a ward of Child and Family Services in critical condition, Grand Chief Derek Nepinak announced Friday the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs will hire its own family and child advocate.

The advocate will work exclusively with First Nations cases starting May 1, Nepinak said.



The job posting for the AMC's family and child advocate.

The advocate would work separately from the provincially mandated children's advocate, and would not report to the government or any type of union.

Nepinak said that would give the official more flexibility and a greater ability to be transparent.

The need for the position "crystallized" after the slaying of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine last August.

In the wake of this week's attack downtown on the young ward of CFS, Nepinak thinks the call to action is even more important.

The girl was still in critical condition Friday, police said.

"I feel absolutely terrible," Nepinak said of the recent assault. "And (attacks) are going to continue until we make fundamental changes to the system.

"If there's a synergy that can be built with Manitoba's statutory advocate, then that's a bonus," he said. "The onus on us right now is to collect the data and identify the magnitude and the scope of the situation, which is not being publicly made available."

Last year, the assembly laid out 10 recommendations in its report, Bringing Our Children Home, about how to better the CFS system for Manitoba First Nations. Second on the recommendations list was hiring a family and child advocate to work exclusively with the chiefs.

Nepinak said after a year's worth of seemingly dead-end conversations with the provincial and federal governments about how to improve child welfare, he wants the assembly to act independently.

"We're going to blow the lid off this system. So the advocate will be mandated to be an advocate – to be a real advocate – not one that's been conditioned by unions or limitations in the statute of limitations," Nepinak said.

The grand chief wants an overhaul of the practices of placing children in care.

On Wednesday, the province promised to stop housing foster kids in hotels starting June 1, but Nepinak wants further improvements.

"It can't be OK to apprehend children – to separate families and to institutionalize our children. What we see and what we know is that our children are becoming institutionalized in systems. They're not growing up in loving and caring homes," he said. "They're being raised by (the) Manitoba Youth Centre or being raised by group homes in all kinds of different living scenarios.

"These things don't nurture the spirit. It's creating some very, very tragic consequences," Nepinak said.

The girl who was attacked Wednesday had been living in the same downtown hotel where Tina Fontaine stayed while she was in CFS care. Wednesday's attack happened about one block away from the hotel, at the Cityplace parkade.

On Thursday, police charged a 15-year-old boy – who is also a ward of CFS – for his alleged involvement. Both teens were staying at the same hotel.

The boy was charged with aggravated assault and aggravated sexual assault. He was detained in custody.

Nepinak said he hopes the assembly's new advocate will provide solutions to help eliminate violence and mistrust in the CFS system.

"We're going to be opening up a channel for families and children – and even social workers if they feel the need to disclose – to speak openly about the limitations and the bullying that's happening... in the system," Nepinak said.

The assembly posted the job description on Facebook. Qualifications include having a university degree in social sciences and being an expert negotiator.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/Manitoba-298625841.html>

Manitoba parents, not kids, should be removed from troubled homes

Misipawistik Cree Nation band council passes radical resolution aimed at keeping kids out of CFS

By Don Marks, [for CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 05, 2015 2:19 PM CT Last Updated: Apr 05, 2015 3:31 PM CT



A group called "CFS you're fired/Winnipeg" protest on the front lawn of the law courts in downtown Winnipeg in May of 2014.

The Misipawistik Cree Nation has come up with a radically different way to deal with the massively increasing number of First Nations children who are coming into care with Manitoba Child and Family Service agencies.

With those numbers now over 9,000 in Manitoba (a number higher than the number of children who were placed in Indian residential schools), this Cree nation, formerly known as Grand Rapids, has passed a band council resolution which removes parents from the homes of troubled families and leaves the children where they are.

This thoughtful and courageous action by the chief and council is something that should have been done long ago, and is only happening because First Nations are asserting control over their own lives that bureaucracies have been stealing away for far too long.

First Nations leaders realize that there are dysfunctional families in their midst and that some parents need serious help with addictions, lack of education, and multi-generational impacts of the Indian residential school experience. These leaders, like the parents themselves, do not want the tragedy of broken families and lost lives which plague their nations.

And they are going to do the right thing by taking the appropriate steps to solve their own problems.

Removing child unacceptable

It isn't often you read a "BCR" (essentially a legislative decree) that moves you to tears. But this one did for me:

"The disruption and trauma felt by children who may be removed from their homes, separated from their siblings, or removed from the community altogether, is not an acceptable outcome to a situation where the child has done nothing wrong."

You might wonder how the government in Misipawistik is able to throw parental guardians out of their own homes, but this might just be one of those wonderful ironies rising from the controversy within the Indian Act which makes all of the property on a First Nation community-owned.

While this has certainly restricted entrepreneurs and business development, it does give the Misipawistik government the right to take this action to protect the children of their community.

The children won't be left in their home alone, of course. The Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency (CNCFCA) will place experienced child care workers inside the home to take care of them while their parents get the help they need. Nobody likes this kind of "big brother, big sister" approach, but every step is taken to insure that such an intervention is absolutely necessary.

The parents are offered every form of assistance available, but they are on their own. Misipawistik is under no obligation to provide other accommodations.

One is reminded of the old days, when everybody in the village had to conform to the good of the whole in order to survive our harsh, Canadian winters. The most severe punishment was to be banished because you simply could not survive on your own.

Support from within

The online community response in Misipawistik has been very supportive of the new initiative.

Facebook posts are overwhelmingly positive with comments like "This is a great idea" and "Right on! I have been saying this for years."

Stephen Parenteau stands out with his comment: "I remember fighting for this a long time ago. People thought I was crazy, but like all forward thinkers back then, I was subjected to anger, ridicule and what not."

Elissa Gabriel sums it all up best:

"This is great for the children, especially if the parents do not want to be responsible and accountable to their own children, but ... I hope parents do get the help so their children can have their mother and father back in their home."

Those parents will be re-united with their children once conditions set down by the CNCFCA are met. It is a hard line approach, but this is what happens when loving, caring people in the community witness tragedy taking place needlessly.

There is a good reason the CNCFCA uses the word "caring" instead of "service," which is more common, in their name.

And it makes common sense.

Don Marks is the editor of Grassroots News.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-parents-not-kids-should-be-removed-from-troubled-homes-1.3021858>

Azzo Rezori: The 'lost tribe,' or our aboriginal children in care

Pending reports about treatment of aboriginal children likely to shake things up

By Azzo Rezori, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 05, 2015 8:09 AM NT Last Updated: Apr 05, 2015 8:09 AM NT



About 320 aboriginal children are in care in Newfoundland and Labrador, with an average 90 moving in and out of the system each year. (CBC)

It was one year ago that a group in Saskatchewan launched a class action suit against the federal government over the once widespread and still existing practice of adopting aboriginal children into so-called "white" families.

The suit on behalf of about 1,200 adoptees claims that these adoptions amounted to cultural genocide modelled on the old approach that the best way to solve the "aboriginal problem" is to "take the Indian out of the child."

Five months later at their annual get-together, premiers from across the country approved a committee with the mandate to make preparations for a national discussion on the whole issue of removing aboriginal children from their homes.

And that was the last heard of it, which illustrates the comment by Matt James, an associate professor of political science at the University of Victoria, that "Canadians have heard only vague accounts of the myriad unjust actions taken (against aboriginal people) by their state apparatus, public agencies and religious institutions."

The reason, James argues, is that religious institutions and the state apparatus are understandably reluctant to air the dirty laundry.

Growing legal challenge forced government's hand

It's well known, for example, that the federal government only agreed to establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada after a gathering tide of class action suits forced it to.

And not everybody endorsed it wholeheartedly.

There are those who see the commission's mandated focus on the individual stories of survivors as a government tactic to deflect attention from the outright colonial and racist policies that drove the establishment and practices of the residential schools in the first place.

Others say the commission is moving much too slowly, and they blame the invisible "white" hand all over.

The commission was set up in 2008. Its final report was due last year, but proceedings stalled when the federal government refused to release important documents until ordered to do so by the Ontario Supreme Court.

The new deadline is the end of June.

Shifted, but not changed

The report will be tough reading, but for the critics the discussion has already moved on. They argue things have shifted but not changed. Aboriginal children across the country are still being removed from their communities and culture in disproportionate numbers.

The new reports will be a double whammy that should make the nation blush, maybe even cringe a little.

Some 20,000 aboriginal children were taken out of their communities and put up for adoption in the 1960s, '70s and '80s in what's become known as the "Scoop."

Most of them remained in Canada, but some were shipped as far as the United States and Europe.

All that was supposed to change after First Nations pushed back and started running their own child and family services agencies. But the agencies received little to no support from "white" governments, and the problem has worsened.

Cindy Blackstock of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and Nico Trocmé of the University of Toronto's Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare observed in a 2008 study that "the over-representation of aboriginal children in the child welfare system is a growing and complex problem rooted in a pervasive history of discrimination and colonialization."

Katherine Hensel, a lawyer who has represented First Nation organizations, concludes "First Nation families are still experiencing the wrongful taking of their children on spurious grounds. There is still widespread, unnecessary and unwarranted removal of children."

The children of the 'lost tribe'

Shawn Atleo, former chief of the Assembly of First Nations, has pointed out "there are more First Nation children in care today than during the height of the residential schools."



Shawn Atleo, former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, has been critical of how aboriginal children have been put in care. (Sean Kilpatrick/Canadian Press)

Among aboriginals themselves these children are referred to as "the lost tribe."

This province has its fair share of them.

On the island portion of the province, children in care are predominantly "white," but in Labrador they're overwhelmingly aboriginal.

According to the latest count, a total of 320 aboriginal children are in care in Newfoundland and Labrador, with an average 90 moving in and out of the system each year.

Four in 10 of those children end up in non-aboriginal homes.

So, if things go as scheduled, there will be two reports this June — the final report on residential schools by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the report by the premiers' committee on aboriginal children in care.

One will focus on the past and things that have mercifully changed, the other on the present and all the things that haven't changed.

It will be a double whammy that should make the nation blush, maybe even cringe a little.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/azzo-rezori-the-lost-tribe-or-our-aboriginal-children-in-care-1.3016169>

Manitoba grandma fasting until CFS returns toddler grandson

Boy, 1, taken from his teenage mom after she broke curfew in shelter where she was staying

[CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 05, 2015 4:37 PM CT Last Updated: Apr 05, 2015 5:23 PM CT



A First Nations grandma is fasting to shine light on issues within the CFS system. (CBC)

A First Nations woman says she will go without eating until Manitoba Child and Family Services (CFS) returns her toddler grandson.

The grandma said CFS took the boy away from her teen daughter because she stayed out past curfew at the shelter where she was living.

The grandma said she has organized meetings and written letters to CFS officials requesting to take care of her grandson, but to no avail.

As a result, she started fasting Sunday at midnight in what she calls a defiant spiritual response to the province.

Last week was the first time she was able to see her grandson since he was apprehended by CFS.

"The social worker was taking him back to the foster home and he screamed and cried like he was being tortured and putting out his arms. And I felt so helpless, I said, 'this is crazy, like what am I doing? Like, I should just take him.'"

She left that meeting feeling that something in her grandson has changed.

"He was such a happy, laughing little guy," said the grandma. "He's not like that anymore. He's lethargic, he's not eating and throughout the visit he would cry. He's not the same anymore."

The grandma hopes to draw attention to the case and shed some light on systemic issues within CFS in hopes that her grandson will be returned and left in her care.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-grandma-fasting-until-cfs-returns-toddler-grandson-1.3021964>

First Nations students gain business skills in new program

By [Alexa Huffman](#), Grande Prairie Daily Herald-Tribune

Monday, April 6, 2015 4:38:21 MDT PM



Hannah Donald, Courtney Willier, Roman Frank, Micheal Phillips-Cardinal and Darrn Parsons are taking part in the AYEP program at the Comp. Supplied

First Nations students are learning how to become successful entrepreneurs in a new class at Grande Prairie Composite High school.

In the fall, the Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program (AYEP) started at the high school, as part of the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative, which aims to improve education outcomes for First Nation students.

“One of the area’s that we’re very focused on and the province is focusing on is the FNMI success,” said Carol Ann MacDonald, superintendent of the Grande Prairie Public School District.

“We chose this program in particular because it’s very much hands-on. It fits in with our plan for engaging our youth.”

In the program, which is open to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) students in Grades 10 to 12, the students develop business skills while studying marketing, financial literacy and other business elements.

The case studies in the optional one-year class are on Aboriginal businesses and the students earn Grade 11 and Grade 12 business credits.

“It’s more of a personal experience for them,” said Jennifer Cochrane, the AYEP teacher.

If you think about the other courses they take, some of the case studies, the whole notion of history typically is the white man’s story.”

Darrian Parsons, a Grade 12 student in the AYEP, said the program is important because it helps FNMI students at the high school.

“A lot of them, they are stereotyped and they are not really encouraged to step outside the box and open their own business if they really wanted to,” said Parsons.

Hannah Donald, a Grade 11 student in the AYEP, says the class lessons incorporate elements of First Nations culture, such as when the students sold homemade bannock tacos at lunch in October to raise money for Me to We.

“You got to set up your own business and sell and then you also had the cultural part of it,” said Donald.

Some of the other activities the AYEP students have done this year include a visit to Two Feathers Motorsports, a local business in Grande Prairie and touring a bank.

Using the skills they have gained in the AYEP, Donald hopes to open a café and Parsons would like to help her mom, a small-business entrepreneur who makes homemade soaps and First Nations crafts.

“I definitely want to help her with finding an actual building for her use and helping her write her own business plan for her own business, should she decide to go to the bank and open a business account or get a loan” said Parsons.

Direct Link: <http://www.dailyheraldtribune.com/2015/04/06/first-nations-students-gain-business-skills-in-new-program>

Aboriginal Health

More aboriginal health staff vital

By Heather Exner-Pirot And Lorna Butler ,, The Starphoenix April 2, 2015

Butler is dean of the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing and Exner-Pirot is the strategist for outreach and indigenous engagement. They are authors of the Conference Board of Canada's Saskatchewan Institute Report, Health Foundations: Nursing's Role in Building Strong Aboriginal Communities.

Recent events have highlighted the struggles the health-care system faces in responding to the needs of Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit clients and supporting equitable health outcomes.

The challenges we face are deep-seated and structural and affected by a complex web of historical, colonial, racial, and class factors. There are no easy solutions, but there's an obvious one.

Educating more aboriginal people to become health professionals is one area where there is both strong evidence to demonstrate the impact and broad consensus on its desirability. Although there has been good progress in the past 20 years, Canada still has a long way to go to achieve a representative health-care workforce.

Registered nurses are the backbone of the health system and are central to First Nations, Métis and Inuit health care, serving in almost every northern and aboriginal community. They also represent the overwhelming majority of the aboriginal health-care workforce. RNs make up 77 per cent of all self-identified aboriginal health professionals.

According to 2011 census data, there are 7,945 aboriginal nurses in Canada. They represent only 2.9 per cent of the overall RN workforce, although aboriginal people represent 4.3 per cent of the population. We will need at least 4,000 more aboriginal RNs this decade to close the gap, which means we will need 4,000 more aboriginal nursing students.

Efforts are being made to achieve this goal. The Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing, the Canadian Nurses Association and the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada have worked to develop a cultural competency and safety curriculum framework. As well, many schools have put in place access programs, advising supports, equity seats and have worked to indigenize programming and campus life.

At our college of nursing, these efforts have translated into success and we are proud to have a student body that is 15.4 per cent aboriginal.

However, we have also been confronted by the fact that students who live in rural and remote areas of Saskatchewan are not as likely to access high school math and chemistry, which are prerequisites of the nursing program. They also face challenges in moving to our campuses in Prince Albert, Saskatoon or Regina to take the nursing degree program or to access a university education at all.

This has meant many rural and remote aboriginal communities continue to rely on itinerant models for recruiting nursing staff, at great financial and opportunity cost, and with implications for continuity and cultural competency of care.

We came to understand that accessible northern and aboriginal health care could best be achieved with accessible nursing education. Although university programming in the humanities, social sciences and education has a long and relatively successful history of community-based learning, nursing is different in that it relies heavily upon the teaching and sensation of clinical skills.

These skills necessarily involve investments in labs, small group instruction, clinical practice sites and hands-on learning. This has often made small, community-based programs both expensive and impracticable. However, new technologies are leading to new possibilities to teach clinical skills remotely.

In response to a demand in northern Saskatchewan for a more reliable health-care workforce, we introduced a four-year baccalaureate nursing program using remote-presence robotics to allow faculty in Saskatoon to provide clinical instruction, in real time, to nursing students in Ile-a-la-Crosse (pop. 1,400) and La Ronge (pop. 3,000).

Although there have been challenges, the program has been a success. We will proudly watch our first graduates cross the stage this spring to receive their nursing degree and more proudly watch as they take up nursing positions in their northern communities.

Providing accessible health care and improvement of health outcomes for aboriginal Canadians is a challenge. More aboriginal RNs will help, but this requires nursing schools and universities to think creatively about how they can offer a quality post-secondary education to aboriginal communities.

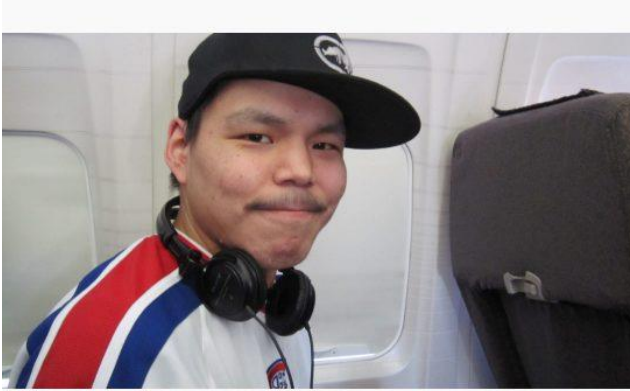
We now know this is a possibility; it has always been a need. Health equity begins with health education.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/health/More+aboriginal+health+staff+vital/10939973/story.html>

Nunavut's youth suicide epidemic — 'Who is next? How do we stop this?'

Questions are being raised about Nunavut's suicide prevention strategy as the rate of deaths — particularly among young men — remains alarmingly high.



Api Akumalik was 24 when he took his life in 2013 — one of a record number of suicides in Nunavut that year. His father says the signs of his distress were unremarkable. “He stayed in his room a lot. He could not be with us as a family.”

By: [Sandro Contenta](#) News, Published on Sat Apr 04 2015

When Joanasie Akumalik thinks back, the signs of impending doom were real but unremarkable. They amounted to a quiet withdrawal.

“He stayed in his room a lot,” Akumalik says of his son, Api. “He could not be with us as a family.”

Akumalik is a municipal sensation in the Arctic city of Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut. On a cold October morning in 2013, he woke at dawn. “I could sense something was wrong,” he says. “All morning it’s like very eerie quiet in the house.”

He and his wife left to visit their daughter at about 9 a.m. Akumalik couldn’t shake a bad feeling. He returned home an hour later and went straight to Api’s room.

“When I found him, he was hanging. He was only wearing shorts, and when I put my arms around his body, it was already cold. At that point, I thought to myself, I can’t do anything.”

Api Akumalik was 24 years old. His death became part of a shocking statistic — 45 suicides in Nunavut in 2013, a record number for one year. They included an 11-year-old boy, the youngest suicide case recorded in Nunavut, who took his life in Repulse Bay. Painful levels of trauma and soul-searching were felt across the territory.

In 2014, the number of suicides dropped to 27. But no one in the territory of 36,000 people is relieved.

Inuit suicide rates have been well above the Canadian national average since the mid-1970s. For the past two decades, they have been about 10 times as high — 110 suicides per 100,000 people. (The rate for First Nations communities is twice as high as the national average.)

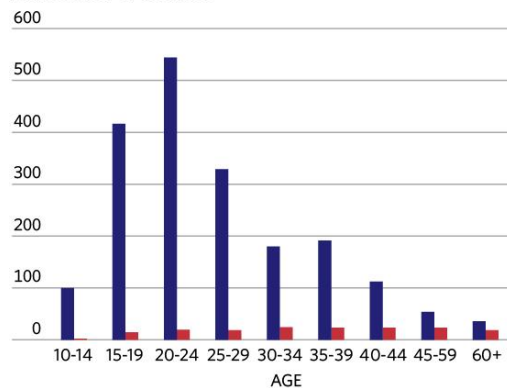
Among young males, the difference is more astounding. Inuit males under 25 account for 56 per cent of all suicides in Nunavut; across Canada, males that age make up 7 per cent of suicides. Researchers say women attempt suicide at least as often as men, but more often survive because they use less lethal means.

Nunavut's suicide spike

Rate of death by suicide, Inuit men in Nunavut (2004-2008 average) and all men in Canada (2004), by age cohort.

■ INUIT MEN IN NUNAVUT (2004-2008)
■ ALL MEN IN CANADA (2004)

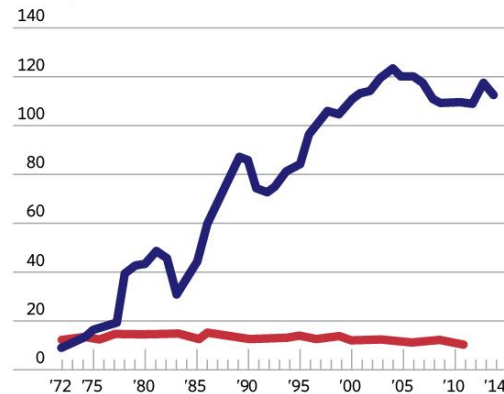
ANNUAL RATE OF DEATH BY SUICIDE/
PER 100,000 POPULATION



Rate of death by suicide, Canada (all) and Inuit in Nunavut (5-year rolling average), 1972-2013.

— INUIT IN NUNAVUT
— CANADA (ALL)

ANNUAL RATE OF DEATH BY SUICIDE/
PER 100,000 POPULATION



SOURCE: Analysis by Jack Hicks, former suicide prevention adviser for the Nunavut government, based on data from the Office of the Chief Coroner of Nunavut and Statistics Canada

TORONTO STAR GRAPHIC

Nunavut and Greenland — both with populations that are at least 85-per-cent indigenous — have the highest youth suicide rates in the world, according to a study [released in March](#) by health researchers from Canada, Russia and Finland.

The body count is only part of the dire picture. An extensive Inuit Health Survey in 2008 discovered that 48 per cent of Inuit adults had considered suicide at some point in their lives. And a study by the Qikiqtani General Hospital in Iqaluit found that almost half of hospitalizations for people in their 20s were due to suicide attempts.

“I don’t meet anybody who doesn’t carry some pain and awareness of the magnitude of the problem,” says Dr. Allison Crawford, a Toronto psychiatrist and former Iqaluit resident who works on suicide prevention in Nunavut. “And their frequent worry is ‘Who is next? How do we stop this?’”

The 2013 spike resulted in Nunavut’s chief coroner, Padma Suramala, announcing an inquest into what she called the “growing epidemic rate of suicide in the territory.” But it has been repeatedly delayed, much to the frustration of Akumalik, who agreed that his son would be one of five suicides the inquest would examine.

Questions are also being raised about Nunavut’s suicide prevention strategy, drafted in October 2010 by the territorial government and other agencies. It includes a greater government focus on suicide prevention, more mental health services, evidence-based

programs to reduce the suicide rate, and early childhood development with quality daycare, proper nutrition and protection from abuse.

The strategy's effectiveness is being officially evaluated amid criticisms of poor implementation and funding.

Dramatic levels of suicide in Nunavut — a self-ruled territory since 1999 — came in the wake of dramatic intervention of authorities from the south.

Whalers, fur traders, explorers and missionaries arrived in the Arctic beginning in the mid-1700s. Canada declared its sovereignty over the region in 1880 and the North-West Mounted Police set up posts. But the general policy, until the 1950s, was to leave the Inuit to their traditional, seasonally nomadic way of life.

From 1920 to 1945, the RCMP investigated 27 suicides by Inuit throughout the Northwest Territories, which at the time included the eastern area now called Nunavut. Only one case involved a young person, a 17-year-old male. These statistics were uncovered by Jack Hicks, former suicide prevention adviser to the Nunavut government, by searching RCMP archives for a PhD thesis on suicides in the region.

That suicide rate was slightly above today's national average. Given the harsh living conditions and complete lack of mental health care at the time, Hicks says, the difference isn't noteworthy.

Upheaval came in the 1950s. The federal government relocated some Inuit families to remote spots in the Arctic, using them at times as human flagpoles in the exercise of sovereignty. [The use of residential schools](#) — where many young Inuit were sexually and physically abused — also grew rapidly.

The DEW Line — [a string of military radar stations](#) across the Arctic to defend against Soviet bombers — was completed in 1957. Inuit were attracted to the massive construction project by jobs and by mounds of discarded building materials, which many scavenged to build shacks near the stations.

Epidemics of tuberculosis and chickenpox ravaged the nascent shanty towns. In 1959 the federal government introduced the first Inuit housing program.

In the blink of an eye, a hunting-and-gathering culture became tied to a wage economy and sedentary lifestyle. Not surprisingly, studies often speak of people caught between two cultures.

Family bonds frayed, traditional coping mechanisms were lost and social scars bore deep. The descendants of the men and women who suffered the traumatic transformation have been paying the price ever since.

“There’s no reason at all to think that the Inuit have any genetic predisposition to mental illness or addiction or suicide,” says Lynn Ryan MacKenzie, Nunavut’s director for mental health and addictions, insisting social factors and historical trauma are largely to blame.

The territory’s suicide rate began climbing in the 1970s with the first generation to grow up in settlements. In 2010, a report that launched Nunavut’s suicide prevention strategy, based on research by health-care specialists, argued that a “continuous cycle of trauma ... has been passed from generation to generation.”

A year later, the auditor general of Canada noted that sexual violence against children in Nunavut is 10 times as high as the national average. Also significantly higher are infant mortality, unemployment, overcrowded households, substance abuse and crime. A Statistics Canada report in March found 36 per cent of Nunavut residents can’t afford to buy the food they need, more than any other province or territory.

The correlation among social factors, mental health and suicide became clear in a five-year study by McGill University researchers released in 2013. It examined the lives of 120 people who committed suicide in Nunavut between 2003 and 2006. The average age was 24. They were compared with 120 living individuals who reflected the age, gender and home communities of those who killed themselves.

Those who took their lives, the study found, were four times as likely to have less than seven years of education. They also suffered physical or sexual abuse as children at significantly higher rates, and had higher levels of unemployment, depression, substance abuse and psychiatric disorders.

RCMP Sgt. Yvonne Niego, president of Embrace Life Council, one of the agencies behind the suicide prevention strategy, adds isolation and boredom to the list of challenges.

“Everything is usually within a two-mile radius,” says Niego, noting roads rarely extend further from a community. “The scenery doesn’t change. There are no trees. The pace of life is slow.

“Everything you see in a day will be the same the whole year round except for snow cover,” continues Niego, speaking on the phone from Iqaluit. “So it’s very hard to forget some trauma when you’re dealing with such a confined space where things visually don’t change.”

Trauma doesn’t need roads to connect communities.

“There are a lot of people in Nunavut, including little kids, who have found bodies,” says Hicks. “We have to realize that 20 or 30 years of this rate of suicide behaviour has put Nunavut socially in a space where virtually nowhere else on the planet is.”

Nunavut residents, the prevention report says, “have been exposed so directly and repeatedly to suicide that they have come to accept the situation as normal.”

Coroner Padma Suramala hoped her inquest would explore underlying issues when she announced it in January 2014. She would not comment on why it has been repeatedly postponed. Niego suggests grieving families who lost loved ones are not ready to have their cases examined in public.

Stigma makes confronting suicide difficult for any society. Inuit silence also stems from a fear that discussing it publicly would encourage others to take their lives, MacKenzie says.

A lack of services in Inuktitut — one of Nunavut’s official languages — hasn’t helped. Inuit also widely complain of programs that fail to tap into local customs and traditional knowledge.

The 2010 suicide prevention strategy was a widely applauded attempt to tackle the challenges. But it has no separate budget, and the Nunavut government has been unable to say how much of its overall budget has been spent on implementing the plan. In the 2014-15 fiscal year, Nunavut had an \$11-million budget for mental health and addiction services.

MacKenzie says a “quality of life committee,” made up of assistant deputy ministers, meets regularly to co-ordinate measures in the plan with initiatives from health, education, housing and others departments.

“We’ve made progress in many areas and there’s still quite a bit more work to be done,” she says.

Concrete action includes the opening of a 12-bed mental health centre in Cambridge Bay, with a full-time staff of 22 people, and expansion of a mental health facility in Iqaluit. Five new community mental health staff were also hired, and MacKenzie says every Nunavut community now has access to a mental health worker.

More than 800 people, including teachers and ordinary residents, have taken an Applied Suicide Intervention Skill Training course that helps them detect and deal with worrying signs. Awareness activities have been held in most communities, including contests in which children submitted drawings or essays about suicide.

“There is more openness over the last number of years (and) I think there is more anger that more is not being done,” says Crawford, program director of northern psychiatric outreach at Toronto’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

“The other way they respond is being sick and tired of people from the south saying, ‘Oh, this is such a tragedy, such an epidemic,’ because it makes it seem like everyone is walking around just about to kill themselves,” she adds.

In a written response tabled in the Nunavut legislature last fall, the government was unable to say whether some programs required under the prevention strategy have been set up. They include increased support for high school youths at risk, initiatives to prevent physical and sexual violence against children and programs focused on early childhood development.

The agencies that drafted the plan are expected to complete a report on how much of it was implemented by the end of March. Hicks describes implementation as mediocre, at best, and blames “extremely weak political and bureaucratic leadership on this issue.”

Akumalik, the city sensation who lost his son, says he has seen little change. He is involved in setting up a support group for families who have lost loved ones to suicide — a pilot project in the prevention strategy — but doesn’t know when it will get off the ground.

“There has just been a lot of talk,” he says.

The last time the Star spoke to Akumalik by phone, he had just returned from visiting his son’s grave. He says Api was “a typical Inuit young man.” He watched hockey, played soccer and computer games, listened to gospel and hip hop music, had a girlfriend and lots of friends, and was close to his family, especially his twin brother, Clayton.

He drank and smoked dope, but his father says never in ways that suggested abuse or addiction. He knew how to hunt but rarely went out on the land.

Api’s early years were spent in Arctic Bay, a hamlet of about 800 people at the northern tip of Baffin Island. His grandfather was a full-time hunter who passed on his skills to Akumalik, his adopted son. Akumalik, now 54, recalls a childhood of relative affluence.

Api’s first years of school, from kindergarten to Grade 3, were largely in Inuktitut. The switch to English in Grade 4 proved difficult. Api was 12 when he dropped out. He would end up landing odd jobs, but nothing full-time. He collected welfare and couldn’t afford to live on his own.

“I think he was getting tired of his life not going anywhere and not having any promising future,” says Akumalik, who has five other children.


“But I cannot answer why he did it. That’s always the question as a father — why did he commit suicide?”

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2015/04/04/nunavuts-youth-suicide-epidemic-who-is-next-how-do-we-stop-this.html>

Rickets, vitamin D deficiency still plague Inuit children

Nunavut has the highest level of bone-softening disorder in Canada

SARAH ROGERS, April 07, 2015 - 9:29 am



**Promote
Vitamin D
For Nunavummiut**

All pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants (breastfed or not), and children should receive daily vitamin D supplementation.

**NUNAVUT'S VITAMIN D
SUPPLEMENTATION PROTOCOL**

	Year Round
Infants < 2 years: receiving breast milk or formula	800 IU/Day
Children* 2-18 years	400 IU/Day
Pregnant* and nursing women*	1000 IU/Day
Adults† > 50 years	400 IU/Day

* Recommended dosage available from a daily multivitamin
† In addition to the vitamin D in prenatal supplements

Nunavut's vitamin D supplement protocol recommends infants under two years of age take a daily supplement of 800 international units (IU), offered free through the territory's health centres.

Despite clear recommendations on how to prevent rickets, Nunavut and Canada's other territories continue to see cases of severely vitamin D-deficient children across the North, says an Ottawa researcher.

"There has been a failure to eradicate the disorder in Canada's North," said Dr. Leanne Ward, director of pediatric bone health at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

"We have clear, publicized and appropriate guidelines, but still we are seeing cases — that's the problem," Ward said in an email to *Nunatsiaq News*.

Rickets is caused by lack of vitamin D and lack of calcium. Children in the North are considered at risk because of maternal diets low in both, in addition to low exposure to sunlight.

Through symptoms like seizures, bone deformity, fractures and a general inability to thrive, the disorder is generally detected during infancy and early childhood, Ward said.

“Rickets is a serious, preventable disorder that affects infants and children primarily,” she said.

Ward first shed light on what researchers have called a resurgence of rickets in Canada in her [2007 study](#), which found that the incidence of the vitamin D-deficiency rickets was 12 times higher in Nunavut than for Canada as a whole.

A Government of Nunavut study released in 2009 found that [eight in 10 expectant mothers](#) don’t get enough vitamin D.

And in 2007, the Government of Nunavut launched a nutritional strategy aimed at [cutting the incidence of rickets in half by 2013](#) and eliminating it altogether by 2017.

Today, Nunavut sees an average of 12 cases of rickets each year, according to the territory’s health department.

That’s despite a protocol from the Government of Nunavut’s health department dating to 2005 on how vitamin D should be administered to infants, children and pregnant or nursing mothers.

In November 2014, the GN’s health department revised its recommendation to reflect those of the Health Canada and the Canadian Pediatric Society, said territorial nutritionist Allison MacRury.

Now, any infants under two years of age and who live above the 55th parallel should take a daily supplement of 800 international units (IU.)

And health centres across the territory provide vitamin D drops to infants, free of charge, and to nursing or pregnant mothers, MacRury said.

“It’s very important for building strong bones and a good foundation for moving into childhood,” MacRury said.

In Canada, vitamin D is also added to milk and margarine.

And it also occurs naturally in many country foods, MacRury explained, such as marine mammals and Arctic char.

As part of a regular diet, Nunavut Food Guide suggests a number of vitamin D-rich foods, like a traditional Inuit diet, but also milk, soy milk and eggs.

But somewhere down the line, it’s clear not all Nunavummiut get the vitamin D supplement they need, Ward said.

“As a first step, we need to understand why — is the knowledge being imparted to families but not being followed through?” she said. “Is it because families cannot afford vitamin D? Or they don’t believe it is necessary?”

Ward said that jurisdictions dealing with rickets could look to education and administration programs, although it would require more study before being implemented as a public health policy.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674-vitamin_d_deficiency_rickets_still_plagues_inuit_children/

Why is Canada ignoring the health of aboriginal peoples?

JEFF READING AND BERNIE FARBER

Contributed to The Globe and Mail

Published Thursday, Apr. 09 2015, 11:07 AM EDT

Last updated Thursday, Apr. 09 2015, 11:30 AM EDT

Professor Jeff Reading is the interim director of the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health at the University of Toronto; Bernie Farber works on First Nations issues with Dr. Michael Dan, who endowed the Institute

Last year in Manitoba, the family of Brian Sinclair withdrew from the inquest into his death. Citing systemic racism within the health care system, the Sinclair family lost confidence that the inquiry would address the root cause of death for the aboriginal man who suffered for 34 hours in the Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre Emergency room. Mr. Sinclair was referred there by a clinic for a routine procedure, a catheter change and antibiotics prescribed. Instead, his health deteriorated, despite vomiting several times and then motionless. He was never triaged or examined by medical staff until he was found dead and rigor mortis had set in.

Last month, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, released a scathing report calling on Canada to initiate a national inquiry to examine the root causes of violence against aboriginal women. Despite what has been called a ‘chorus of critics’ from the international community, Canada has denied any systemic violations of the rights of aboriginal women; consequently the report is quietly being dismissed.

And, recently in a small isolated northern First Nation community (population about 1,000), four young people took their lives and another four attempted suicide. In what has become almost “standard operating procedure”, the Federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs refused to comment about the epidemic of suicide among vulnerable aboriginal youth.

And sadly there is much more. How is it that the infant mortality rate on aboriginal reserves is 14 deaths per 1,000 births – nearly double the national average? How can it be that life expectancy among the Inuit is 15 years shorter than the Canadian average? Can it really be possible that suicide rates among Canada’s aboriginal youth are up to 11 times higher than the national average? Thanks to decisions made by the Stephen Harper’s government, close to 10 aboriginal health research groups have had their funding either severely cut or totally withdrawn. This at a time when virtually every other nation with aboriginal populations (U.S., New Zealand, Australia and others) are increasing funding to indigenous health, education, training and research.

All these indigenous health initiatives have been instrumental in the past in focusing on the factors which determine Indigenous health working towards improving the lives of Canada’s aboriginal people, the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population.

Dr. Thomas Dignan, chair of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeon’s Aboriginal Health Advisory Committee and acting community medicine specialist for Health Canada’s First Nations and Inuit Health Branch told the Canadian Medical association Journal that “the state of Aboriginal health is a national embarrassment and leadership is needed now more than ever.”

It is clear that the federal government’s track record when it comes to anything aboriginal is dismal at best. A determination to ignore the travesty of missing and dead aboriginal women, turning a blind eye to aboriginal youth suicide, the rejection of any real effort to equalize education opportunities for Aboriginal children flags much of what is wrong with government policy.

The real sorrow however is in the fact that the government sees absolutely nothing wrong with its miserable treatment of indigenous Canadians; and especially so when it comes to health related matters. This same government’s decision to abandon the mandatory long form census not only has it hit Canadians in general with less information about our wellbeing, but lack of ongoing health data is devastating for future generations of aboriginal Canadians.

Some have argued that maintaining indigenous people in poverty and sickness is part of the calculus of doing business. With First Nations reserves in a state of perpetual crisis it effectively neutralizes their abilities to act as stewards of their traditional territories when it comes to natural resources development and even treaty negotiations.

In the end what these tragic stories and gloomy data really reveal is a collective denial of the plight of aboriginal peoples. It also points to a Canada that has become increasingly

hardhearted and compassionless. When will Canadians tell the federal government to fulfill its fiduciary, legal and yes moral obligations to recognize the constitutional entrenchment of aboriginal peoples' rights and to narrow the gap in health and wellbeing for Canada's first peoples'?

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/why-is-canada-ignoring-the-health-of-aboriginal-peoples/article23856403/>

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

Metis adoptee in England crowdfunding to meet 11 siblings in Canada he never knew he had

[National News](#) | April 2, 2015 by [Kenneth Jackson](#) |



Kenneth Jackson

APTN National News

Daniel Frost would flip through family photo albums growing up and see people who didn't look like him.

He knew them as grandpa or grandma, but they weren't his grandparents.

Born Metis, he was adopted as an infant from northern Saskatchewan by British parents who moved him across the Atlantic ocean to the United Kingdom.

He's built a life there.

Then last year he decided to make a real effort to find his birth family.

Frost figured he'd have a couple siblings.

What he found was a family tree that extended far beyond that.

Thirteen brothers and sisters (two deceased).

He first found his birth sister Edna Smith who sent him photos of his siblings.

“Suddenly, I saw people looking back at me that looked like me,” said Frost, 46, from London where he is training to be a nursing assistant. “I’ve even got a brother that looks like me. It’s something that is quite extraordinary.”



Daniel Frost

Frost was born Darin Maurice to Metis parents from Buffalo Narrows in Saskatchewan in 1968. He was quickly taken by the province’s child welfare system and put in foster care.

This was the era of the 60s Scoop.

It’s now well-known that thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their families and adopted into non-Indigenous homes.

Edna Smith was also adopted by a British family, but they stayed in Saskatchewan.

She said a death in the immediate family ripped the home apart, which led to many of the children being put in foster care and later adopted.



Edna Smith/facebook

“I have a sister in B.C., I have a sister in Washington (State), I have a sister in Red Deer, one in North Battleford, a brother in Saskatoon, two brothers in Calgary, a brother in Regina, a brother in Dillon and Dan,” said Smith.

Frost is raising money for travel costs to visit his family through a [crowdfunding site](#).

“I think it’s awesome and we can’t wait for him to get over here,” said Smith. “I look at him and I know he’s my brother.”

It’s that connection that Frost has always been looking for.

Growing up in the United Kingdom, Frost was confused as Spanish or Italian, even Jewish, because of this skin colour. He was known as the “little brown boy.” His parents never hid where they got him and he knew he was Indigenous.

“Most people in Europe kind of think that First Nation or Native people are no longer around. They’re found in history books,” said Frost.

Then he came to Toronto in the 1990s to visit friends.

“It was the first time I experienced any kind of recognition of who I was. It was both in a good way and a bad way,” he said.

Some would come up to him and ask if he was Cree and he felt welcomed.

“I also had other people who were like ‘We know about your people. You’re all alcoholics,’” said Frost, adding despite the racism, “In a way, it was quite life-fulfilling, even the bad stuff, because you’re understanding who I am.”

Both of his birth parents have passed away, his father in 2013 and his mother in 2010.

But in the 90s he made his first attempt to find his birth family and received a package from the province of Saskatchewan.

It included a hand written note from his mother scribbled on a scrap piece of paper.

She addressed it “my darling son.”

“I was quite overwhelmed by it,” said Frost. “Someone else was calling me her son.”

He lost that note in a fire and never pursued his search.

“I’m not sure I was mature enough to handle it at the time,” he said.

But the “little brown boy” from England is now determined to end his search.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/04/02/metis-adoptee-england-crowdfunding-meet-11-siblings-canada-never-knew/>

'Those Drunk Indians': What Indigenous Women Face Daily in Canada and Beyond

[Evie Ruddy, Briarpatch Magazine](#)

4/7/15

Editor's Note: Last month a jury acquitted a man accused of murdering an indigenous sex worker in an Edmonton hotel room, despite the four-inch-long laceration inside her vagina that caused her to bleed to death. This appeared in [Briarpatch](#) magazine on April 1, the day before the verdict was protested in 14 cities across Canada. Reprinted with permission.

In the early 90s, two police officers rushed a house party in East Regina. When the officers found my partner in the basement, they shoved her into a laundry room and locked the door behind them. The female cop grabbed my partner by the collar of her shirt, pinned her against a washing machine and said, “hit me, squaw.” Another police officer stood behind them and watched as my partner, scared for her life, refused to hit the cop.

My partner started screaming for her sister, who was also at the party, but the officer told her to “shut the fuck up.” My partner heard three knocks on the door and then her sister’s voice calling her name, which forced the officers to open the door and let my partner go. Her sister grabbed her by the arm, and they ran out of the house.

My partner is an auditor. She has worked for the provincial government for more than 10 years and has audited provincial construction projects, records management, and employee expenses. She has a degree in business administration, drives a BMW, which she bought with the money she earned as a senior auditor, and, over the course of her career, has paid more than \$300,000 in taxes. Last year alone, she paid approximately \$30,000 in provincial and federal taxes.

Yet on the day that two police officers decided to stereotype her, my partner was viewed as nothing but a “squaw” – and with that came assumptions: lazy, on welfare, a drunk. That was 20 years ago, but not much has changed.

This week, in the news, a judge released video footage of a Regina police officer kicking a homeless First Nations man. “But it’s not a race thing,” people say on social media. Meanwhile, a hate-filled Facebook page titled “Aboriginals Need to Get a Job and Stop Using Our Tax Dollars” appears in my newsfeed.

My partner is from Ocean Man First Nation. She has dark skin, brown eyes, and her grandmother's distinct Nakota nose. I am a settler, a mix of Irish, German, and French with blue eyes and pale skin. In 1982, my grandfather died in his sleep from alcohol poisoning. No one deduced from his numerous bouts of binge drinking, or his alcohol addiction, that all white people are drunks, but I have heard, in casual conversation, of "those drunk Indians." Stereotypes like this prevent people from seeing my partner as human. "I am seen as an Indian first," she says. "Then a woman. After that, it doesn't matter that I'm gay or an auditor or someone's aunt. I'm already less than."

I don't have to worry about the same things my partner does. Last year, we traveled to Eastend, Saskatchewan together. One morning, we decided to drive to Cypress Hills, the land that once belonged to my partner's ancestors, the land on which some of the Nakota people were massacred, including my partner's grandmother's close relatives. On that morning, my partner was worried about our car running out of gas, even though the tank was nearly full. "I don't want to get stuck on the side of the road," she said. "I'm the only Indian I've seen in three days." I joked that we could fall back on my white privilege. We laughed, but it was more true than funny. The thought of getting stranded in rural Saskatchewan hadn't crossed my mind, and if we were to get stuck, I could depend on the kindness of a stranger or a police officer. My partner couldn't.



Cypress Hills (Photo: Evie Ruddy)

Two weeks ago, a white man was found not guilty by a male-dominated, near-all-white jury for the murder of a Cree mother of three, who bled to death in an Edmonton hotel room from an 11-centimetre wound in her vagina. During the murder trial for Cindy Gladue, live images of pathologists showing the wound inside her vagina were displayed on a screen before the jury. The accused admitted to hurting Gladue, who was a sex worker, and claimed that her death was a result of consensual rough sex, despite the fact she could not have given consent due to her blood alcohol level, which was four times the legal limit.

Since my partner read these details, I have been kissing away tears from her face. Is her life worth so little that if she were murdered there would be no justice? Would her body parts be disassembled and live streamed in a court of law?

“I am worth less than an animal,” she concludes. I tell her “that’s not true,” but we both know that even an animal would not be treated so crudely by the justice system.

On March 18, the same day that Gladue’s accused was found not guilty, an abandoned cat, whose legs were tied with electrical tape, was rescued in Regina. The cat has since lovingly been nicknamed Bruce Almighty and his story has reached beyond national borders. A GoFundMe campaign has raised more than \$22,000 for this cat. The media continue to publish updates on his recovery.

Meanwhile, the man who was kicked by a police officer has been called a “degenerate” on social media. Where is the empathy that Bruce Almighty got? While Bruce, the cat, is seen as innocent, Indigenous peoples are seen as having brought this violence and hatred upon themselves.

A man who admitted to inflicting a fatal wound to a human is free. But then again, Cindy Gladue was not considered a human. She was viewed as a First Nations woman – an identity that has been negatively constructed by colonial discourse, according to Indigenous scholar Kim Anderson. She writes:

“The dirty, easy squaw was invented long before poverty, abuse, and oppression beset our peoples. She was invented and then reinforced because she proved useful to the colonizer. The ‘uncivilized’ squaw justified taking over Indian land. She eased the conscience of those who wished to sexually abuse without consequence. She was handy to greedy consumers. Dirty and lazy, she excused those who removed her children and paved the way for assimilation into mainstream culture.”

This racist construction of First Nations female identity continues to justify violence toward Indigenous women and a lack of accountability. If 1,200 white women were missing and murdered, would the government still say an inquiry is not needed?

Today is my partner’s birthday. Fifty-some years ago, her grandmother cleaned farmhouses in rural Saskatchewan in exchange for a safe place to stay with her daughter. She was hiding from government officials, who were taking Indigenous women’s children and putting them in residential schools. Had the government found my partner’s grandmother, my partner might not be here. So, today I celebrate her. She is gentle, compassionate, and kind, and I want the world to be as gentle, compassionate, and kind in return to her.

Evie Ruddy is a freelance journalist, digital storyteller, and creative writer.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/07/those-drunk-indians-what-indigenous-women-face-daily-canada-and-beyond-159919>

No, The Inuit Don't Have 100 Words For Snow

The myth about “Eskimo” words for snow is more than half a century old. Where did it come from, and why does it refuse to die?

posted on April 9, 2015, at 3:36 a.m.

[Tom Chivers](#)

BuzzFeed Staff

Eskimos have a thousand words for snow, or something, right?



An Inuit musher prepares his dog sled team in Igloolik, Canada. Christopher Wilson / Reuters

You'll almost certainly have read a piece in which someone says “If the Inuit have 50 words for snow, surely Britons should have 50 words for ‘rail replacement bus service’,” or something along those lines. [Here's one](#). [Here's another](#), which claims that since Eskimos have X words for snow, the Japanese must have Y words for different kinds of porn. The trope is so common it's even got a name: “[Snowclone](#)”. And it's false.

The myth that Eskimos or Inuit have some improbable number of words for snow (sometimes it's 50, sometimes it's as high as 400) is pervasive, but a myth nonetheless. [In 1986, Laura Martin, a professor of modern languages at Cleveland State University, traced the origin of the claim back to a man called Franz Boas](#). In 1911, Boas wrote – as a

throwaway line, illustrating a point about how languages resemble each other – that there are, as Martin paraphrases, “four lexically unrelated words for snow in Eskimo: *aput* ‘snow on the ground’, *qana* ‘falling snow’, *piqsirpoq* ‘drifting snow’, and *qimuqsuq* ‘a snow drift’”. Boas didn’t make much effort to distinguish between words, roots of words, and other terms, Martin says.

The myth began to take hold in the 1940s, when a man called Benjamin Whorf wrote about Eskimo vocabulary.



Whorf is a major – and majorly controversial – figure in the study of language. He’s the man behind [the largely debunked Sapir-Whorf hypothesis](#), also known as linguistic relativity, which says that the words we know dictate the thoughts we can have. His claim was that because Eskimos have extra words for snow, they are capable of thinking about snow in ways that others can’t. He seems to have taken Boas’s four vague examples, and, in a 1940 *Technology Review* article called “Science and linguistics”, expanded upon them:

We have the same word for falling snow, snow on the ground, snow packed hard like ice, slushy snow, wind-driven flying snow – whatever the situation may be. To an Eskimo, this all-inclusive word would be almost unthinkable; he would say that falling snow, slushy snow, and so on, are sensuously and operationally different, different things to contend with; he uses different words for them and for other kinds of snow.



An inukshuk, or Inuit stone landmark, in Nunavut, Canada. Chris Wattie / Reuters

Whorf seemed to be saying that there are a minimum of seven Eskimo words for snow (falling, on the ground, packed, slushy, wind-driven, and “other kinds”, presumably at least two). And from there it exploded. Roger Brown’s *Words and Things* claimed that there were exactly three Eskimo words for snow (based apparently on a drawing in Whorf’s paper). Soon after that, the linguist Carol Eastman claimed “many”. Academic textbooks started quoting it as fact. After that, the myth left textbooks and joined popular culture, mutating wildly as it did so. Martin points out that the 1978 Lanford Wilson play *The Fifth of July* gave the number as 50. A *New York Times* editorial said 100. Pullum quotes another *NYT* piece that claimed “four dozen”. From there, it became just another thing everybody knows, like the one about tomatoes being fruit. But it’s not true.

First, there isn’t one “Inuit language”.



There are the [Yupik](#) languages, spoken in parts of Alaska and in a few villages in far-eastern Russia, and there are the [Inuit](#) languages, spoken mainly in Greenland and Canada. They're both part of the wider [Eskimo-Aleut](#) language family.

And it's not true to say that any of those languages have 200 “words for snow”.

Part of the confusion arises from what we mean by the word “word”.



The Eskimo-Aleut languages are “[agglutinative](#)” languages, meaning that they construct complex words out of smaller units. Hungarian and Turkish do similar things. As Dave Wilton of the University of Toronto says in this Oxford Dictionaries blog post, “the West Greenlandic word *siku*, or ‘sea ice’, is used as the root for *sikursuit*, ‘pack ice’, *sikuluaq*, ‘new ice’, *sikuaq*, ‘thin ice’, and *sikurluk*, ‘melting ice’.” It’s not that there are a particularly large number of snow-words in Eskimo-Aleut languages, it’s that instead of saying “packed snow” or “wet snow”, they say something like “packedsnow” or “wetsnow”. Just as we could make any number of sentences out of bits like that – “firm packed snow that has been driven by the wind” – so Eskimo-language speakers can do that, except they build them into single words. [Geoffrey Pullum, a linguist at the University of Edinburgh, says:](#)

The list of snow-referring roots to stick them on isn’t that long: *qani-* for a snowflake, *api-* for snow considered as stuff lying on the ground and covering things up, a root meaning “slush”, a root meaning “blizzard”, a root meaning “drift”, and a few others – very roughly the same number of roots as in English. Nonetheless, the number of distinct

words you can derive from them is not 50, or 150, or 1500, or a million, but simply unbounded. Only stamina sets a limit.

So not only do Eskimo languages not have “100 words for snow”, but it’s meaningless to talk about how many words they have for anything.

They have an infinite number of possible words for snow, and for grass, and music, and coffee, and everything else.

The myth is hard to kill. Pullum, in an essay called “[The great Eskimo vocabulary hoax](#)”, says “The persistent interestingness and symbolic usefulness overrides any lack of factuality.” It’s too easy a joke to make, too simple a way of highlighting some perceived gap in Western understanding.

But it’s a myth, nonetheless.

Direct Link: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/tomchivers/no-the-inuit-dont-have-100-words-for-snow#.ouxGJajqn>

Aboriginal Jobs & Labour

Mistawasis boosts jobs through team approach

By Jason Warick, The Starphoenix April 6, 2015

Bonnie Daniels is enjoying a rare moment of quiet at the Iron Buffalo Centre.

The innovative education and employment hub is normally buzzing with activity, particularly after last week's career fair which featured a host of small-business owners and corporate executives. The Easter long weekend gave its skeleton staff a chance to recharge their batteries, said Daniels, the centre's employment counsellor.

While social assistance, or welfare, rates remain stubbornly high on most Saskatchewan First Nations, others like Mistawasis are showing marked improvement.

Daniels said it's hard work, but definitely worth it.

Mistawasis has saved more than \$400,000 in welfare payments over the past two years. Residents of neighbouring reserves and towns are starting to come to them for help.

"You just see a light in people's eyes when they realize what they can do," she said.

In 2013-14, there were 18,121 First Nations welfare recipients on Saskatchewan reserves, according to numbers provided to the federal government by First Nations.

That's nearly identical to 2010-11, when there were 18,151.

However, the tribal councils that partnered with the federal government on its Enhanced Service Delivery programs launched last year have seen a reduction in welfare rolls of 500, said an official with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AANDC).

Mistawasis, through its umbrella Saskatoon Tribal Council, employs a federally-funded counsellor for its younger members entering the workforce. But they've gone much further, creating a "one-stop shop" in the band's former health centre.

The Iron Buffalo Centre takes its name from Chief Mistawasis, the first signatory of Treaty Six covering much of central Saskatchewan. Although Mistawasis means "Big Child" in Cree, he was honoured with the additional name by other First Nations chiefs, said Iron Buffalo special projects worker Anthony Johnson.

The centre's name is appropriate because education, training and employment are the "new buffalo" for First Nations people, he said.

The centre houses a computer room, another small classroom for students to take courses on everything from high school upgrading to daycare worker to heavy equipment operator.

The 273 people who came through the doors last year were assigned a team to help them evaluate their career goals. It's not just about the job skills required - barriers can include lack of child care or transportation. Iron Buffalo director Shantelle Watson said they place two or three people in new jobs every week.

Most have to take jobs outside the community of 1,200 people located 120 kilometres north of Saskatoon.

Renee Daniels had been on welfare until Iron Buffalo staff got her a temporary training placement at Wal-Mart in Prince Albert. The 23-year-old continued training and working with her case team. She's now a janitorial supervisor at an Alberta oil refinery. She enjoys the one week in, one week out schedule, because it allows her to live at Mistawasis.

"It's really helped me a lot," she said.

Brian Black, 26, has taken courses through Iron Buffalo after a stint on social assistance. He then worked as a roofer and for the band's public works department. He currently works for a local construction company digging culverts.

He said he's glad to have found work he enjoys, and never wants to return to social assistance.

"It's depressing. I didn't like it at all," he said. "If people are motivated, there's nothing that should be stopping them."

Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief Felix Thomas said there have been "incremental improvements" among many of the organization's member First Nations. Some, like Whitecap Dakota Nation south of Saskatoon, already have more jobs than people due to a casino, golf course and other interests.

Mistawasis can also serve as a model for other communities struggling to solve the employment dilemma.

"It's not just about jobs," Thomas said. "It's about getting the support to find your career."

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Mistawasis+Trims+Welfare/10948510/story.html>

Aboriginal Politics

Inuit should be partners, not northern signposts: Senator

“If Canada is going to achieve its territorial aims in the Arctic, it needs to treat the Inuit population as partners”

SPECIAL TO NUNATSIAQ NEWS, April 02, 2015 – 2:34 pm



An aerial view of the Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker Louis St-Laurent. The refurbished vessel did ensatio work in the Lomonosov Ridge area between Ellesmere Island and Greenland to collect data for Canada's offshore continental shelf extension submission under the UNCLOS process. (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COAST GUARD)

ART EGGLETON

If Canada is going to achieve its territorial aims in the Arctic, it needs to treat the Inuit population as partners, rather than using only their existence to bolster Canadian sovereignty claims.

This was the message from a panel of experts who appeared before the Senate Liberal Open Caucus on Wednesday, March 25 to discuss Arctic issues.

Rapid warming in the Arctic has led to the increased potential of tapping the vast natural resources that are said to lie below the seabed. The five arctic coastal states — Canada, Russia, Denmark, Norway and the United States — are making territorial claims for these areas to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf through a process established by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

However, as [Robin Campbell of Hutchins Legal pointed out](#), none of this process looks at the rights of the Inuit people in the Arctic.

Campbell noted that the Inuit Circumpolar Council, an NGO representing approximately 150,000 Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia) has enjoyed a great deal of support from Canada in the past, but are now being largely excluded in discussions about key Arctic issues.

“Canada seems to be taking the tact that, ‘this is an external matter, this is between us and other states, Inuit have no role to play, and we’ll talk with Inuit once this is dealt with, if we talk to them at all,’” she said.

Peter Hutchins, also of Hutchins Legal, noted that the ironic part in all this is that the presence of the Inuit in the Arctic is the best chance Canada has at achieving its objectives.

However, this can only be achieved by respecting the spirit of the treaties which Canada and the Inuit have signed in the past, and this is not happening.

“Canada says we now have full sovereignty and that’s it,” Hutchins stated, “but the transaction was quid pro quo, it was in return for something, and frankly if Canada does not honour its obligations, the Inuit are entitled to say the deal’s off.”

Furthermore, as the physical conditions in the Arctic under which these treaties were signed rapidly change, receding winter sea ice for example, the Inuit have the option of becoming free agents.

“There is nothing to stop the Inuit from talking to the other coastal Arctic states and saying ‘let’s work together,’” Hutchins said, “they are not our Inuit, they are Inuit.”

[Terry Audla, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami](#), noted that for their part, the Inuit are more than willing to act with Canada in good faith.

“Our arms are wide open. We’ve always been extending out to Canada to say we are here to work with you to shore up your Arctic sovereignty claims, give us a call anytime”

Art Eggleton is an Ontario Senator and chair of the Senate’s Liberal Open Caucus meetings. This commentary first appeared in the Hill Times March 31, 2015.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit_should_be_partners_not_northern_signposts_senator/

Controversial First Nations chief who billed band \$1M wins re-election

Ron Giesbrecht will resume his role as chief of the Kwikwetlem First Nation in Coquitlam, which consists of only about 80 members

[The Canadian Press](#)

April 3, 2015

COQUITLAM, B.C. – A controversial First Nations chief in British Columbia has won re-election despite drawing widespread criticism last year for accepting a nearly \$1-million paycheck.

Ron Giesbrecht has won a new mandate to lead the tiny Kwikwetlem (kwee-kwet-lum) First Nation in Coquitlam, which consists of only about 80 members.

The lion’s share of Giesbrecht’s \$1 million in pay was a bonus for brokering a land deal with the province as the band’s economic development officer.

Some members of the band were quick to offer public messages of support for their leader, whose payday made him the highest-earning chief in the country.

Giesbrecht has said that while four band members wanted his resignation, he had the support of the majority of the aboriginal community located in Coquitlam.

Giesbrecht’s 30 votes beat out his competitor’s 16 to give him the election victory.

Direct Link: <http://www.macleans.ca/economy/controversial-first-nations-chief/>

First Nations chiefs call for firing of Aboriginal Affairs minister

Vincent McDermott, QMI AGENCY

First posted: Friday, April 03, 2015 04:32 PM EDT | Updated: Friday, April 03, 2015 04:41 PM EDT



Canada's Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt take part in a news conference following the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Ottawa February 27, 2015. REUTERS/Chris Wattie

FORT MCMURRAY, Alta. – First Nations chiefs from across northern Alberta say they will no longer communicate with Aboriginal Affairs until the current minister is removed.

Steve Coutoreille, grand chief of Treaty 8 First Nations, says Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt was sensationalized and made offensive statements during a March 20 meeting in Calgary with several First Nations leaders.

Valcourt told the leaders that up to 70% of murdered aboriginal women were killed by aboriginal men, citing an unpublished RCMP report.

The chiefs questioned that statistic because a previous RCMP report on missing and murdered aboriginal women did not indicate perpetrators' ethnicities.

They said the report released last May said more than 90% of the victims knew their killers, but were more likely to be murdered by a casual acquaintance than by a current or former spouse.

“Mr. Valcourt did not provide us with any evidence. He was challenged by a lot of people who heard him but did not give us any proof,” said Courtoreille, who has been campaigning for an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

In a letter sent Tuesday to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Courtoreille described Valcourt's behaviour during the meeting as "rude, demeaning, blaming, and condescending."

"It is clear, Prime Minister, that this leaves an extremely problematic dynamic in our ongoing efforts to strengthen our communities and this country," he wrote. "We cannot and will not work with someone who exhibits such blatant disrespect for First Nation people. As such, we demand the immediate removal of Bernard Valcourt as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada."

The letter also said that if Valcourt's statistical claim is indeed true, the information should be shared with aboriginal leaders immediately.

Valcourt's office did not return requests for comment.

Direct Link: <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/04/03/first-nations-chiefs-call-for-firing-of-aboriginal-affairs-minister>

Judge orders Métis Nation-Saskatchewan to hold legislative assembly

Offices shut down last week after federal funding frozen

[CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 06, 2015 2:43 PM CT Last Updated: Apr 06, 2015 3:03 PM CT



A Queen's Bench judge has ordered the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) to hold a legislative assembly on or before June 19.

In a written decision, Justice Brian Scherman worried about imposing the court's will on an organization like the Métis Nation. However, he wrote that it was "indefensible" to hold off holding the assembly until this fall.

The main issue surrounding the timing of the meeting revolves around money.

Aboriginal Affairs has frozen any funding coming into the MN-S until it holds an assembly, made up of Métis delegates from across the province. As a result, the Métis Nation was forced to close its doors last week, laying off its remaining staff.

In his decision, Justice Scherman wrote about two "factions" in the MN-S that were bitterly divided. One faction, led by MN-S Vice-President Gerald Morin, argued the group needed more time to organize before a legislative assembly would be held.

However, Justice Scherman wrote, "Without funding MN-S will not be able to deliver its programs, it will fail to carry out its constitutional mandate, it will default on its debts, and its public and political reputation and integrity will be irreparably damaged."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/judge-orders-m%C3%A9tis-nation-saskatchewan-to-hold-legislative-assembly-1.3022698>

Métis Nation President Robert Doucette welcomes judge's ruling

Hopes holding legislative assembly will lead to restoration of federal funding

[CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 07, 2015 12:08 PM CT Last Updated: Apr 07, 2015 12:08 PM CT



MN-S President Robert Doucette told reporters, "It's time to get the work done," after a judge ordered the group to hold a meeting by this summer. (David Shield/CBC)

The President of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) is celebrating a judge's decision ordering the group to meet by this summer.

In a written decision, Justice Brian Scherman said the MN-S must hold a legislative assembly on or before June 19.

Aboriginal Affairs has frozen any payments to the Metis Nation-Saskatchewan until that meeting takes place. Last week, all employees at the organization's head office were laid off, as there was no money to pay them.

"It's time to get the work done," said MN-S President Robert Doucette. "Let's do this for the benefit of Métis people."

The Métis Nation has been wracked by political infighting for decades.

Opponents of Doucette had originally set the assembly to meet in September. However, Justice Sherman said waiting until the fall was unnecessary, and would 'irreparably damage' the organization.

Both sides in the battle have voiced a willingness to meet with each other, although nothing has been arranged.

Vice-president considers appeal

Vice-President Gerald Morin disagreed with the judge's decision, and said he is considering an appeal. Judges such as Scherman shouldn't interfere in Métis politics, he said.

"It reminds me of the old colonial, traditional, historic Department of Indian Affairs approach of saying, 'You don't know what you're doing,'" Morin said after the ruling.

Doucette, on the other hand, maintains it is essential that the work of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan get underway.

"All of our issues that need to be dealt with, the housing issues, the employment issues, the harvesting issues need to be addressed," he said.

An official date for the assembly will still need to be set.

Doucette said he has already been in contact with Aboriginal Affairs to get the group's money restored.

He said the MN-S office will be open on a bare-bones basis to help set up the meeting in June.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/m%C3%A9tis-nation-president-robert-doucette-welcomes-judge-s-ruling-1.3023694>

Why Bill C-51 is a threat to aboriginal rights

MATTHEW COON COME

Contributed to The Globe and Mail

Published Wednesday, Apr. 08 2015, 8:44 AM EDT

Last updated Wednesday, Apr. 08 2015, 4:16 PM EDT

Matthew Coon Come is the Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) and the Chair of the Cree Nation Government.

In January, the federal government tabled Bill C-51, the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015. The bill has generated widespread uncertainty and concern. It fails to safeguard the dignity, human rights and security of indigenous peoples and individuals. It is inconsistent with good governance.

The bill would allow federal judges to grant Canada's spy agency, CSIS, the right to violate any law of Canada, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Such permission would be granted in a secret hearing with no appeal. Only the government side would be represented.

The bill contemplates the global sharing of information obtained by CSIS, which may or may not be accurate. International human rights law is not considered. This directly contradicts Canada's international commitments. Last December, the UN General Assembly affirmed by consensus that states must ensure that "any measure taken to combat terrorism complies with all their obligations under international law ... in particular ... human rights".

Disputes relating to indigenous peoples should not be criminalized, especially through anti-terrorism legislation. Indigenous peoples are human rights defenders and our issues often include environmental, natural resource development and other essential concerns. For example, in Quebec, the James Bay Crees continue to oppose uranium mining, but such democratic protest is fully accepted by the provincial government. We are not being criminalized or spied upon. Bill C-51 could change this.

Important lessons on "security" can be learned from Canada's history. The security and human rights of indigenous peoples have been, and continue to be, severely impacted by non-indigenous governments and other third parties. A non-discriminatory approach would require that the "security of Canada" be inclusive of all peoples, including indigenous peoples.

Security is a human right. This right of indigenous peoples includes: environmental security; food security; economic security; social security; cultural security; human security; and territorial security. The 2003 Declaration on Security in the Americas affirms: “the traditional concept and approach must be expanded to encompass new and non-traditional threats, which include political, economic, social, health, and environmental aspects.”

Environmental, cultural and other dimensions of security are reflected in the landmark ruling of the Supreme Court in *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*. The Court emphasized the fiduciary duty of the Crown and added: “... incursions on Aboriginal title cannot be justified if they would substantially deprive future generations of the benefit of the land.” This has far-reaching implications for the security of indigenous peoples, particularly in the contexts of resource development and climate change.

In the past nine months, the federal government has not publicly acknowledged the indigenous victory in *Tsilhqot'in Nation*. Bill C-51 fails to consider “security” from the perspectives and inherent human rights of indigenous peoples. The rights, security and well-being of present and future generations of indigenous peoples must be ensured.

Since its election in 2006, the federal government has refused to acknowledge within Canada that indigenous peoples’ collective rights are human rights. In November, 2010, Canada endorsed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The federal government concluded: “We are now confident that Canada can interpret the principles expressed in the Declaration in a manner that is consistent with our Constitution and legal framework.”

The Declaration is a consensus, universal international instrument. No country in the world formally objects to it. The Declaration applies to all indigenous peoples globally. It promotes harmonious and co-operative relations between states and Indigenous peoples. It affirms our right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and our right to our lands, territories and resources.

At the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, an Outcome Document was adopted by consensus by the General Assembly. The centerpiece of the document is the Declaration. However, Canada indicated that it could not support the commitment by states to “uphold the principles of the Declaration”.

Such a position has no credibility. It fails to uphold the honour of the Crown and constitutes bad faith. The government of Canada has a legal obligation to uphold indigenous peoples’ human rights, including those affirmed in the Declaration. Bill C-51 undermines this duty and threatens our security and well-being.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/why-bill-c-51-is-a-threat-to-aboriginal-rights/article23830829/>

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

Yukon First Nations takes over Whitehorse air-monitoring site

Site measures air quality in territory for mercury and other emissions

[CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 05, 2015 11:51 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 05, 2015 11:52 AM CT



Little Fox Lake is one of several monitoring sites linked across the globe that help develop United Nations protocols on emissions. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada)

The Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) is now in charge of a site located north of Whitehorse that monitors the level of naturally-occurring mercury and other emissions in the Yukon air.

The monitoring site at Little Fox Lake was built in 2007 and is part of the [Northern Contaminants Program](#), run by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) in partnership with groups like CYFN.

"If you have a good strong data set, there can be national action or international action," says Bob Vandijken, CYFN's director of circumpolar relations.

The monitoring site at Little Fox Lake is one of many stations across the globe that help determine United Nations protocols on emissions.

Though the level of mercury in the Yukon has dropped since the station opened, "some of the new contaminants of concern are just starting to show up on our radar," says Vandijken. "We're just learning of their possible effects and their longevity in the ecosystems."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yukon-first-nations-takes-over-whitehorse-air-monitoring-site-1.3021807>

Heiltsuk Nation's traditional herring harvest makes sustainable sense

MARK HUME

VANCOUVER — The Globe and Mail

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When the Supreme Court of Canada looked at a case involving two Heiltsuk First Nation men who were charged with illegally trying to sell herring eggs, the documents examined included an entry in Alexander Mackenzie's journal.

"The Indians who had caused us so much alarm, we now discovered to be inhabitants of the islands, and traders in various articles, such as cedar-bark, prepared to be wove into mats, fish-spawn, copper, iron and beads, the latter which they get on their coast," he wrote in 1793, shortly after reaching the Pacific on his epic overland trek across Canada.

The court also saw an entry in the journal of Dr. William Tolmie, a fur trader who in 1834 wrote: "From 15 to 20 large canoes of Wacash's people passed on their way to Caughquill country – the canoes were laden with boxes, hampers and filled with dried herring spawn, which they are to barter for Oolaghens."

The "fish spawn" those early observers wrote about were herring eggs that the Heiltsuk and other First Nations have been harvesting on the B.C. coast for about 10,000 years.

The methods they use have changed little over the centuries. They wait until the herring lay their eggs on kelp, and then they harvest the long fronds of seaweed covered with clusters of tiny, glistening eggs.

In the 1997 case that involved Donald and William Gladstone, the court accepted that the Heiltsuk had been fishing for, and trading, herring eggs since before the time of first contact and that the Heiltsuk had a pre-existing right to harvest and to sell herring eggs.

The traditional native harvest is supposed to take priority over the commercial fishery, but in practice, the commercial boats are allowed to scoop up the herring before they get into the shallows to spawn.

“The way they fish takes away the fish totally from the ecosystem and affects the biomass because they actually kill the fish during their harvesting,” Carrie Humchitt, legal services co-ordinator for the Heiltsuk said in a recent interview. “They break the fish in half and squeeze out the eggs. The rest of the fish is used for cat food, dog food and fertilizer. With ours, we hang kelp in the water and the fish swim around the kelp and lay their eggs on it. Then we harvest the kelp. We don’t touch the fish at all. So that’s the difference ... theirs is a kill fishery and ours isn’t.”

But the traditional fishing the Heiltsuk practice has become increasingly difficult because the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has allowed the commercial fleet to overharvest herring in many areas, causing stock collapses that have led to total fishing bans.

From 2006 until 2014, herring fishing was closed on the central coast. When DFO allowed a commercial harvest there last year it sparked protests by First Nations because they didn’t think stocks had adequately recovered. Those protests became even more intense this spring, when the commercial fleet returned.

The Heiltsuk occupied DFO offices near Bella Bella and threatened a “war on the water” if the commercial boats dropped their nets. In the end, the seine fleet got a brief opening, scooping up 690 tonnes before Heiltsuk boats arrived. But the gill-net fleet, which was set to fish later, was forced to sail away without taking any herring as the Heiltsuk protest intensified.

Ms. Humchitt said there was a lot of celebrating in Bella Bella when the commercial fleet finally pulled out, but now the Heiltsuk are worried about what will happen next spring, when the herring return to spawn. She said the Heiltsuk and DFO have agreed to work together to manage the herring fishery, but the First Nations are worried that the government won’t follow through.

“We want joint management,” Ms. Humchitt said.

She said the Heiltsuk goal is to see herring stocks rebuilt to a level that will sustain both First Nation and commercial fisheries.

But that may mean an end to commercial methods that kill spawning fish.

If the objective is to get the eggs, which are highly valued in Japan, then why not use the aboriginal method? It makes more sense to take eggs on kelp and let the fish live to spawn again.

That kind of fishing was supporting a lucrative trade on the coast when the first European explorers arrived. It should be allowed to do so again.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/heiltsuks-traditional-herring-harvest-makes-sustainable-sense/article23802865/>

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Changing face: The emergence of a new genre of memoir addressing the consequences of a changing planet

[Linda Besner, Special to National Post](#) | April 2, 2015 | Last Updated: Apr 3 3:14 PM ET



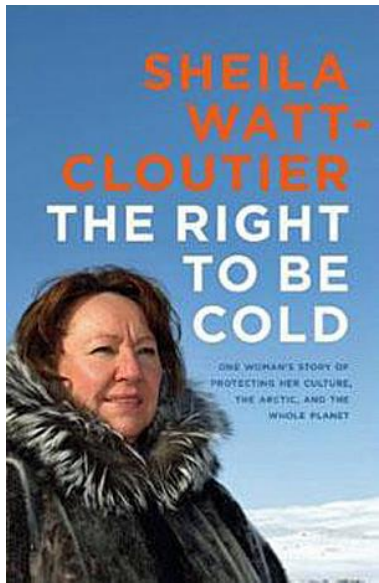
When Sheila Watt-Cloutier was a child, her name was Sheila E8-352. The “E” meant she lived east of Gjoa Haven, a hamlet on King William Island in present-day Nunavut. Eight was the number the Canadian government had assigned to her community, a tiny gathering of families who lived mainly through subsistence hunting and *ensatio* exclusively by dogsled. When she left her home in New Fort Chimo (now Kuujjuaq) in northern Quebec to attend residential school in Manitoba, she carried the number with her, stamped on a red dogtag.

Carrie Saxifrage also had a different name as a child, although she doesn’t say what it was. Her original last name, presumably, was also freighted with signifiers: it indicated some national, religious, or ethnic affiliation, and came to carry personal meaning. At some point, Saxifrage chose to set it aside. She and her husband named themselves after a white flower that grows on mountaintops, and, as she recounts, “Our families didn’t know what to make of our earnest explanations of how we were claiming relationship to those pure, high places[.]”

Both writers have new books that can be characterized as examples of a new form: the climate change memoir. Watt-Cloutier’s *The Right to Be Cold: One Woman’s Story of Protecting Her Culture, the Arctic and the Whole Planet*, and Saxifrage’s *The Big Swim: Coming Ashore in a World Adrift* both address the personal consequences of a warming planet. Both women want the same thing: a habitable world for their children and grandchildren.

There's an uncomfortable paradox in the human rights approach to climate change

The Right To Be Cold takes its title from an offhand comment by a British journalist—"You're fighting for the right to be cold"—that Watt-Cloutier has taken up as her slogan and rallying cry. "I believe the campaign to link climate change to human rights protection—efforts that acknowledge our shared humanity and our shared future—are the most effective way to bring about lasting change," Watt-Cloutier writes.



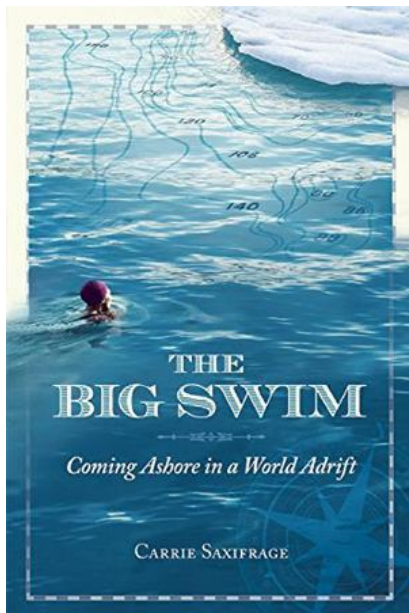
Inuit began adopting last names in the 1960s (due to an Inuk-headed initiative called Project Surname), but northern activists and politicians are still having trouble convincing southern law-makers to treat the Inuit as people rather than numbers. Especially, as very small numbers: the total Inuit population, comprising indigenous peoples of northern Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and Siberia, is only 160,000 people. Of a meeting in Geneva that Watt-Cloutier attended to discuss the impact of toxic substances on the Arctic food-chain, she writes, "If the debate became a numbers game, we as Inuit and Aboriginal peoples of the circumpolar world would surely lose."

In various leadership capacities, Watt-Cloutier has ensatio the world with two main messages: use of toxic substances and emission of greenhouse gases is endangering human life in the Arctic; and, what happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic. In 2012 Watt-Cloutier's face appeared on the Canadian stamp, and in 2007 she was co-nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize along with Al Gore.

But there's an uncomfortable paradox in the human rights approach to climate change. According to international covenant, Inuit have inalienable economic, social, cultural, and health rights. These rights are threatened by climate change and it is therefore necessary for the global community to act. The argument, however, tends not to stop there, but to segue into a second point: the Arctic is an early-warning system that signals what is swiftly coming for the rest of us. In response to her "right to be cold" being shrugged off by a woman at a conference, Watt-Cloutier writes, "The rights we're

fighting for are her rights too. Just as our environment is her environment too... We all have the right to be protected from climate change.”

The brutal truth is that most people south of the Arctic don’t care enough about Inuit populations to take significant steps to limit our carbon emissions. The majority of us will most likely wait until it is *our* rights—to water, to affordable food, to protection from resource wars and extreme weather events—that are directly threatened. (In other words, until it’s too late.) Centring climate change discourse and activism on human rights forces us to confront the fact that as a society, we care about the human rights of some people more than those of others.



The Right to be Cold is essentially a political memoir, and as such it’s both overly detailed and a bit vague — there’s this committee and that committee, and the convention in Nairobi versus the convention in Stockholm. Saxifrage’s *The Big Swim*, by contrast, is a more overtly literary book about the author’s relationship to nature. Describing herself in a wetsuit, Saxifrage writes, “I look like a dominatrix who dropped her boots and crop into the sea and now has to dive in after them.”

There is a perception that certain people who do choose to change their behaviour—by eating local organic food, limiting travel to reduce their carbon footprint, buying more expensive goods that are produced in a more sustainable way—are exercising sanctimonious lifestyle choices rooted in a narcissistic belief in their own consequence in the world. How dare they believe their choices matter?

Saxifrage’s struggles inspire less sympathy than Watt-Cloutier’s. One of her transitions to sustainable living is to swear off air travel, and while it’s certainly an inconvenience to do so, the entitled tone of Saxifrage’s discussion of her decision makes it almost embarrassing to read: “But of course, we *had* to fly...every four years or so, we took a big trip to explore the world...Travel stories swapped with friends illustrated our

adventurous spirits and interesting tastes.” Instead, she takes the bus to Mexico for a Spanish-instruction holiday, and declines a seat in her friend’s private jet for the trip home from a rafting vacation in the Grand Canyon.

Because we live in a society that values some human lives over others, attempting to put “a human face” on climate change often highlights what keeps us apart rather than pointing the way to our common goal.

The issue of flight illustrates the chasm between Saxifrage and Watt-Cloutier’s experiences. Watt-Cloutier’s son has learning difficulties, leading the family to worry that he will not complete high school. However, with much effort, he finishes his education and becomes a commercial airline pilot. In the most touching passage in *The Right to be Cold*, Watt-Cloutier’s son calls to tell her he’ll be flying over her house in Iqaluit at precisely 12:09, and if she goes outside and looks up, she’ll see him. Watt-Cloutier sets her alarm, and at nine minutes past midnight she’s standing out on her balcony. “I heard the distant roar of a jet and saw the flashing lights above me. It was my boy. After everything Eric and I had been through, all his painful struggles in school, there he was, doing what he had always dreamed of—he was literally soaring.” When the flight service station in Iqaluit calls to say they’re in radio contact with her son, and that he’s asking if she saw him fly over, she tells them she did, and that she’s still weeping with pride.

Reading the two books together reminded me of how easily and unfairly the science of climate change can be clouded by the social labels we apply to the people who give voice to what should be our collective worry. Because we live in a society that values some human lives over others, attempting to put “a human face” on climate change often highlights what keeps us apart rather than pointing the way to our common goal.

It would be both incorrect and unfair to perceive Watt-Cloutier’s struggle to prevent disastrous climate change as more meaningful than Saxifrage’s. (Saxifrage, it should be noted, also engages in political activism and reports on environmental issues for the *Vancouver Observer*.) But it’s hard not to see the image of the airplane — a symbol of hope and freedom for one, a symbol of overconsumption for the other — as emblematic of the vast distances between even those of us who want the same things.

Part of our resistance to changing our individual, and indeed collective, behaviour in response to climate change is tied to negative social perceptions of what “kind of people” shop at health food stores or attend protests

Even Watt-Cloutier finds that her work draws accusations of narcissism or privilege. In international meetings, other stakeholders complain that the Inuit are claiming too much attention for the Arctic and for themselves. Watt-Cloutier has often been unpopular among other Inuit, who feel she pushes herself and her views forward with too much zeal. She also writes about her complex feelings about being perceived as white. Her father was a white RCMP officer who left before she was born, and as a child, her *qallunaat* looks bothered her. It’s a mixed blessing when she realizes that her looks,

along with her southern education, might be subtly helping her to bring Inuit issues to the table in forums dominated by Canadians of European descent. “When white people first looked at me,” she writes, “they didn’t see ‘other’... They saw someone who looked like them—and who sounded like them.”

The question of who we can hear these messages from—who can not only tell us the facts, but illustrate a way to live in response to the facts—depends on the same complicated and unfair mechanisms underpinning all of our social decisions. Part of our resistance to changing our individual, and indeed collective, behaviour in response to climate change is tied to negative social perceptions of what “kind of people” shop at health food stores or attend protests. “Real people” don’t have friends with private jets.

But the good news is that *The Right to be Cold* and *The Big Swim* will appeal to somewhat different audiences. Should the climate change memoir become a widespread new genre, we may, in the next decade or so, see personal testimonials of how climate change has affected the lives of all kinds of different people across the globe. We’ll be exposed to a variety of aesthetics, skin colours, income levels, education levels, and spiritual beliefs associated with sustainable living. The “kind of people” who change their lives in response to climate change will be everyone.

3 * *

*Linda Besner is the author of *The Id Kid*. Follow her on Twitter: [@lindabesner](https://twitter.com/lindabesner)*

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/arts/books/the-right-to-be-cold-the-big-swim>

Heiltsuk First Nation claims victory over disputed herring fishery

MARK HUME

VANCOUVER — The Globe and Mail

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A confrontation between the Heiltsuk First Nation and the federal government that threatened to erupt into a “war on the water” appears to have ended with the commercial fleet leaving the central coast, where the industry had been waiting for a disputed fishery to open.

“We’re pretty ecstatic here,” Carrie Humchitt, legal services co-ordinator for the Heiltsuk said Wednesday. “We’re just waiting for official confirmation, but we’ve received word through channels that all of the industry boats will be pulling out.”

She said the First Nation, which is based in Bella Bella, had given the federal department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) until noon to close the waters of the central coast to the commercial gill net fleet, which had been waiting for nearly a week to fish for an allocated harvest of 600 tonnes of herring.

DFO spokesman Dan Bate said in an e-mail that the central coast herring fishery is now closed and the government is working with First Nations on herring management.

Ian McAllister of Pacific Wild, an environmental group that has been monitoring the fishery, said commercial boats began leaving the area Wednesday afternoon.

“It looks like the fleet has packed up and is going south empty,” he said.

Ms. Humchitt said Heiltsuk members were preparing to go out on the water to blockade the herring fleet when the band made “an 11th hour attempt at resolution,” asking DFO to shut down the central-coast fishery and agree to hold talks to avoid another confrontation next year.

“We’ve let industry know that there’s going to be a war on the water should they try to come in to Heiltsuk territory,” she said.

Chief Marilyn Slett, who for the past four days occupied the DFO regional office near Bella Bella, said it has been a stressful week of protests and tense negotiations.

Heiltsuk members took to their boats last week in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the seine fleet from harvesting herring during a limited opening that was called with little notice. By the time the native protesters arrived on the fishing grounds, the seine fleet had harvested about 700 tonnes of herring. The gill-net fleet, which uses different methods, was standing by for its chance.

“It’s been an emotional few days,” said Chief Slett.

She said she and a colleague occupied the DFO offices while up to 150 people camped outside. Some aboriginal protesters also showed up outside DFO’s main office in Vancouver on Tuesday.

“It’s unfortunate it had to get to this point,” Chief Slett said of the protests. At the heart of the issue is a dispute between First Nations and DFO over the accuracy of stock assessments.

The Heiltsuk on the central coast, the Haida in Haida Gwaii, and the Nuu-chah-nulth on the West Coast of Vancouver Island have all expressed opposition to herring fisheries in

their areas, saying the stocks are much smaller than DFO claims. The Nuu-chah-nulth failed in an attempt to get a court order to stop the fishery in their area, while the Haida worked out an agreement to keep Haida Gwaii closed.

Gregory Thomas, chair of the Herring Industry Advisory Board, said commercial fishermen believe DFO's stock assessments are valid.

"The First Nations ... say there isn't enough fish and that any commercial roe herring fishery will negatively impact their [native] fishery," said Mr. Thomas. "The industry view is there's a lot of science behind the current stock assessment and that that science has indicated there is a reasonable return of herring on the central coast – and certainly a fishable abundance."

Mr. Thomas said it is difficult to calculate the economic impact of losing a fishing opportunity on the central coast, but it's considerable.

"The gill net target is 600 tonnes and as of this morning there has been no catch. That's a significant amount of herring," he said.

Herring are fished on the B.C. coast in February and March, when they gather to spawn. The roe, or eggs, of the small fish are largely sold on the Asian market.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/heiltsuk-first-nation-claims-victory-over-disputed-herring-fishery/article23757390/>

Feds say treaty reform needed across Canada, but especially in B.C.

[The Canadian Press](#)

Apr 4th, 2015



Canada flag photograph from Toronto Public Library

A strong federal commitment to treaty-making in Canada is needed to speed up land-claims deals that move at a glacial pace and cost too much money, especially in British Columbia, said a report released Friday.

The 92-page report by Doug Eyford, who is Prime Minister Stephen Harper's aboriginal envoy, said First Nations across Canada agree the federal government is only willing to meet its minimum legal obligations on the issue, even though an attitude adjustment and major shift in direction is required.

The New Direction report urges the government to get fully engaged in the treaty process and determine what talks should move forward or be abandoned.

Cited as sticking points are institutional barriers, inefficiencies with the process, poor accountability, and a lack of urgency.

"There have been shortcomings in Canada's efforts to implement modern treaties," said the report. "Higher level oversight is required to ensure all federal departments meet their implementation obligations. Treaty-making has progressed at a glacial pace and at significant cost."

Eyford's report said there have been 26 modern treaties since 1973, another 75 are at various stages of negotiation across Canada, but most are bogged down in bureaucracy or stalled.

The report paid close attention to B.C. where a modern treaty-negotiation process was introduced in 1993 but has only produced four treaties among more than 200 First Nations.

Most B.C. First Nations, with the exception of less than two dozen aboriginal groups, have not signed land-claims treaties. The majority of the treaties date back to the mid-1800s, when B.C. was a colony and Vancouver Island First Nations signed agreements with governor James Douglas.

Eyford said B.C. believed it would have settled most of its treaties by now.

"After more than 20 years of negotiations, it is clear those expectations were overly ambitious if not unrealistic," he said in the report. "Substantial changes are required if treaty-making is to become more effective."

B.C. Premier Christy Clark announced a change recently when her cabinet refused to approve former Liberal cabinet minister George Abbott as the commissioner who oversees the treaty process.

Clark's Liberals have said they remain committed to reaching land-claims treaties, but in recent years have focused on economic-benefits deals with First Nations that were viewed as pre-treaty side deals.

B.C.'s Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister John Rustad said in a statement the province welcomes the report and will work with Ottawa and First Nations to improve the process.

"The report confirms what we in B.C. have known for some time: the current treaty process is expensive and takes too long," said Rustad.

"The province agrees we need to find new and innovative ways to achieve lasting reconciliation with First Nations. More than \$620 million has been spent in the past 22 years on the treaty process but less than half of B.C. First Nations have been engaged. We can and will do better."

Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt said in a statement the government is taking action to help make the treaty process more effective.

"Our goal is to work in partnership so we can seize opportunities to promote prosperous communities and economic development for the benefit of all Canadians," he said.

The First Nations Summit, the province's largest aboriginal group, said increased federal commitment is welcome, while the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs said Eyford's report endorses a failing process.

First Nations Summit spokeswoman Cheryl Casimer said full federal engagement, the imposition of timelines and a closer watch on treaty talks will add needed impetus to the negotiations.

"We're pleased to see Mr. Eyford took the opportunity to incorporate what he heard from B.C. First Nations," she said.

The report said the BC Treaty Commission's current mandate may be too limited, and further reforms should include ways to measure progress and alternative resolution methods if a treaty is not likely.

Direct Link: <http://www.vancouverobserver.com/news/feds-say-treaty-reform-needed-across-canada-especially-bc>

B.C.'s approach to land deals lauded by PM's envoy

JUSTINE HUNTER

VICTORIA — The Globe and Mail

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The B.C. government gets high marks from the man Ottawa appointed to revitalize Canada's treaty-making process.

Doug Eyford is urging Ottawa to follow a trail broken by British Columbia in finding reconciliation with First Nations through agreements that deliver benefits without decades of negotiations and mountains of debt.

Mr. Eyford, a Vancouver lawyer and treaty negotiator, has been Ottawa's go-to guy on a number of files related to aboriginal relations – even though the federal Conservatives aren't always happy with his answers.

Last week, Mr. Eyford released his report on the federal comprehensive claims process – the treaty-making vehicle through which Ottawa has invested more than \$1-billion with little result.

"Treaty-making has progressed at a glacial pace and at significant cost," he found. Each of the three parties – provincial, federal and First Nations partners – are assigned some of the blame. But Mr. Eyford takes aim at the Conservative government where it hurts most: They have failed to ensure taxpayer's money is being spent well. He says a third party needs to be brought in to ensure accountability that is currently lacking.

In 42 years under the federal model, 26 treaties across the nation have been concluded. Many of those still in the process have little prospect of ever concluding – in fact, Mr. Eyford argues the treaty process itself has become a job-creation program for some First Nations communities that have little incentive to wrap things up.

The report called on the Crown – federal and provincial – to double down on those treaty negotiations with good prospects. But he said it's time to take a hard look at the rest, and to invest efforts and money in alternatives.

The B.C. government has long since reached this conclusion. Although it has earned criticism for undermining the treaty process, the province has produced results in other ways with more than 250 economic development pacts that are delivering benefits to First Nations communities in a fraction of the time it takes to conclude a single treaty.

"Crown-Aboriginal relations and the environment for economic development have improved as a result of the provincial government's purposeful approach," Mr. Eyford wrote in his 92-page report to federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt.

Mr. Valcourt's tepid response to the Eyford report amounted to a vague promise to consult some more. John Rustad, B.C.'s Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, was far more enthusiastic. "The report confirms what we in B.C. have known for some time: The current treaty process is expensive and takes too long," he said

in a statement. “The province agrees we need to find new and innovative ways to achieve lasting reconciliation with First Nations.”

The Eyford report catalogues in detail how B.C. has moved toward reconciliation.

B.C. shares provincial revenue from mining, forestry and other resources with First Nations. It has signed 16 “incremental treaty agreements” in the past two years that transfer provincial Crown land so that Aboriginal communities can get on with economic and community development opportunities. It has provided tens of millions of dollars to allow First Nations to obtain equity stakes in clean energy and pipeline developments. And it has reached a series of “reconciliation framework agreements” that include decision-making, revenue-sharing, economic and social-development elements.

Mr. Eyford is less impressed, however, with B.C.’s recent handling of the B.C. Treaty Commission. The Premier, in her haste to push Ottawa and First Nations toward a new model for negotiations, has reversed her support for new chief commissioner, George Abbott, and suggested the treaty commission might be best shut down.

In his report, Mr. Eyford says the treaty commission has been hampered by the limits imposed on it by the federal and provincial governments. He sees a role for the treaty commission, with an expanded mandate, to complete those treaties that are in reach, and to help usher those others out the door in a constructive way. “There is a critical need for oversight throughout the process, a role the commission could take on.”

The Premier’s stand on the treaty commissioner is aimed at trying to get Ottawa to shift its resources from treaty-making to more broadly supporting other kinds of settlements.

But her strategy is risky. Other provinces have secured federal support for the settlement of treaties, but the new B.C. model, so far, has proceeded without any federal dollars. Ottawa may simply use the Eyford report as grounds to turn off the taps on the treaty process, and leave the B.C. government and industry to continue down the reconciliation path on their own dime.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/provinces-approach-to-land-deals-lauded-by-pms-envoy/article23801117/>

First Nations to sign tentative treaty deal but future of process in doubt

JUSTINE HUNTER

VICTORIA — The Globe and Mail

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A group of five First Nations on southern Vancouver Island is expected to sign a tentative treaty settlement on Thursday – even as some of the key participants reconsider the slow and costly process of settling modern-day treaties.

The agreement-in-principle between the Te’Mexw Treaty Association, Ottawa and Victoria is being inked in the B.C. capital with all the ceremony that is expected after almost 21 years of negotiations. But the talks are not over – the parties will now move to the “final agreement” stage.

Meanwhile, the future for other First Nations that are further behind in the treaty process is in question.

Last month, John Rustad, B.C. Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, surprised both First Nations and the federal government by refusing to appoint a new chief commissioner for the agency that facilitates treaty negotiations in the province. Soon after, the federal government released a report that recommends walking away from the table in cases where talks have stalled.

Celeste Haldane, the acting head of the B.C. Treaty Commission, said in an interview the signing ceremony on Thursday demonstrates that it is “business as usual” for those First Nations in active negotiations.

Ms. Haldane said the provincial government has deliberately played down the success of treaty-making as it shifts its attention to economic-development pacts with individual nations. But she agreed there needs to be a way out for First Nations communities that are stalled in the process. Some are unwilling to walk away because they will be expected to repay loans of tens of millions of dollars – money that was borrowed to pay for treaty negotiations.

“There needs to be an exit strategy for these nations, because they do hold whatever loans they have taken for this,” she said Wednesday.

The province says it won’t appoint a new chief commissioner because it wants to reconsider the future of the B.C. treaty process. It cites the dismal statistics that after 22 years, only four treaties have been concluded. In that time, the B.C. Treaty Commission has allocated about \$627-million in negotiation support funding to treaty tables.

Most of that money has been paid out in the form of loans to First Nations but with so few treaties concluded, little of it has been repaid.

Tom Happynook was appointed by the province to the commission just two weeks before Victoria withdrew its support for the chief commissioner. He said Wednesday he was disconcerted about the province’s change of heart but has since been assured there is no plan to dismantle the commission.

“Clearly B.C. wanted changes to the process,” he said. “I view it as an opportunity now, to reinvigorate the process.” As the chief negotiator for the Maa-Nulth, he said he is well-positioned to help bring treaties home. “I come with a lot of good experience, going from an Indian band to a self-governing nation, and I’m looking forward to sharing that with the other tables.”

But there are disputes about the measure of success – or the scale of the problem.

The Treaty Commission says eight treaties have been completed under its authority – it counts the Maa-Nulth treaty as five separate agreements because there are five First Nations represented at that treaty table, each with its own government. It says there are 18 treaty tables where talks have stalled.

The province however estimates that there are 33 treaty tables that are going nowhere – they are either not meeting on a regular basis or not actively seeking any treaty milestones.

That definition of active treaty negotiations may become crucial if Ottawa takes the advice of its special envoy, Doug Eyford, who proposes the government fast-track treaties now near completion but extract itself from those tables with little prospect of settlement.

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt’s office says the government is committed to seeking a more effective treaty process but the Eyford report is still under review.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/first-nations-to-sign-tentative-treaty-deal-but-future-of-process-in-doubt/article23853358/>

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

Verdict in Cree sex worker death focus of noon protest

[CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 02, 2015 8:16 AM MT Last Updated: Apr 02, 2015 8:39 AM MT



Cindy Gladue, 36, was found dead in the bathtub of a west end hotel room four years ago. (Facebook)

Indigenous groups from around Alberta will be part of a lunchtime rally at the Edmonton courthouse to demand an appeal in the case of Cindy Gladue.

Last month, a jury found long-distance trucker Bradley Barton not guilty of first-degree murder and manslaughter in Gladue's death. The 36-year-old sex worker, and mother of three, bled to death in the bathtub of Barton's Edmonton hotel room in June 2011.

The decision has outraged people who see the decision as another sign of systemic bias against indigenous women. Gladue was of Cree descent.

Rallies are planned across the country on Thursday. The Alberta chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Cameron Alexis, will be at the Edmonton event to show support for Gladue's family. .

"And I feel for the family. We're not sensationalizing this by any means, we are victims and people have to understand that," he said. "You have to imagine what that whole family is going through. It's a very painful process.

The Crown calls Gladue's death shocking and appalling and is reviewing the case.

Barton's lawyer Dino Bottos says the jury made its decision based on listening to four weeks of evidence.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/verdict-in-cree-sex-worker-death-focus-of-noon-protest-1.3019300>

RCMP to update report on missing and murdered aboriginal women

First Nations leaders have requested the information collected in the RCMP's initial study on missing and murdered aboriginal women be made public.



Ontario Regional Chief Stan Beardy of the Assembly of First Nations said the RCMP report on missing and murdered aboriginal women “should be made available and backed up by scientific research. We are talking about people’s lives.”

By: [Tanya Talaga](#) Staff Reporter, Published on Wed Apr 01 2015

A year after the release of a report on 1,181 aboriginal women and girls that have been murdered or gone missing in the last three decades, the RCMP will provide an update on progress made.

First Nations leaders are calling for all the information gathered for the report to be released to the public — a step authorities have so far not agreed to.

The RCMP is not conducting new research for a second report, but they will provide an update in May on the areas listed in their original report, the [National Operational Overview on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women](#), which stunned the nation after police put a figure to what many already knew — First Nations women fall victim to violence far more than non-aboriginals do.

The RCMP update will include progress made on unresolved cases, focusing on prevention, increasing public awareness and making sure the data is accurate and captures women of aboriginal background, according to RCMP Sgt. Harold Pfleiderer.

Many First Nations leaders and aboriginal advocates feel the number of 1,181 murdered and missing is too low and that there are more uncounted cases out there. Of those listed in the RCMP report, 1,017 were murdered and 164 are missing women and girls from 1980 to 2012.

After the report’s initial release, cries for a national inquiry into how to stop the killings have grown louder. But Prime Minister Stephen Harper steadfastly [refuses to hold an](#)

[inquiry](#). Instead, the provinces have [decided to hold a roundtable](#) looking at systemic issues surrounding the issue.

Last month, when Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt commented to First Nations chiefs that 70 per cent of the cases of murdered and missing aboriginal women were perpetrated by indigenous men, community leaders demanded to know what new information the minister has.

It is time for the RCMP to release all the data they have collected so far on the cases so everyone can analyze the wide variety of factors that have led to the systemic problems of murdered and missing women, said Assembly of First Nations Ontario Regional Chief Stan Beardy.

“Any report will have pros and cons. Depending on what views you are trying to project, you’ll use what works for you. The report should be made available and backed up by scientific research. We are talking about people’s lives,” Beardy said.

In Parliament on Wednesday, Valcourt refused to comment on what was discussed in the meeting with the chiefs on March 20, but he called the session productive.

Valcourt’s office would not answer specific calls from the Star.

But opposition members accused Valcourt in the House of Commons on Wednesday of being discourteous during the meeting and demanded he account for his actions, saying one chief even complained that Valcourt’s “responses and attitude strongly reflects the very same attitude that resulted in Indian residential schools.”

The original RCMP report concluded that 90 per cent of the homicide cases identified had been solved and that this percentage was similar to solved murders of non-First Nations women. Most homicides were committed by men and the report noted most women knew their attackers.

In cities across Canada on Thursday, First Nations people and advocates will march to remember Cindy Gladue, who bled to death from a 11-centimetre wound in her vagina. Gladue was a sex worker.

Bradley Barton, the long-haul trucker accused of killing her, was freed after the mostly white male jury found him not guilty. His defence argued the wound happened during rough sex.

During the criminal trial, Gladue’s body suffered further injustice after her wounded vagina was brought into court as evidence, said Audrey Huntley of Aboriginal Legal Services in Toronto. She is one of the organizers of the march to remember Gladue.

“That really shows the level of racism we are dealing with. I think that is one big reason why her case has touched such a nerve,” Huntley said.

“There has been absolutely no justice for her in the courts or from the jury. Because she was a former or current sex worker, does that mean she was allowed to be violated or killed?” she asked.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/04/01/rcmp-to-update-report-on-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women.html>

Demonstrators demand justice for aboriginal women following court verdict

[Adrian Hopkins, Calgary Herald](#) [More from Adrian Hopkins, Calgary Herald](#)

Published on: April 3, 2015

Last Updated: April 3, 2015 10:44 AM MDT

Dozens of demonstrators attending a vigil Thursday in memory of an Edmonton woman found dead in a motel room bathtub four years ago were offered a brief moment of celebration upon learning her case will be appealed.

About 75 people gathered near the Calgary courthouse to protest the acquittal of an Ontario truck driver in the death of Cindy Gladue, a case that has renewed calls for justice for murdered and missing aboriginal women across the country.

A jury last month found Bradley Barton not guilty of first-degree murder in the death of Gladue, a 36-year-old prostitute who bled to death. Prosecutors announced Thursday that the verdict will be appealed.

Michelle Robinson, president of the Aboriginal People’s Commission of Alberta, organized the Calgary rally, one of 22 held across the country. She drew cheers from the crowd after announcing the Crown will seek a second trial.

“This is a small victory,” she said. “Today’s vigil will help the Gladue family to heal.”

While news of the appeal brought some joy, those emotions were tempered by Gladue’s case and the disproportionate death of indigenous women in Canada.

“The acquittal sends a strong message to Albertans,” Robinson said. “If you’re an indigenous woman in this province, your life doesn’t matter.”

Stephanie English, a member of the Piikani nation, echoed that sentiment.

“Aboriginal women are more than just a number,” English said. “I fear for my daughters, that they will suffer the same fate as Cindy.”

An RCMP report last May identified more than 1,000 aboriginal women and girls murdered between 1980 and 2012. It said aboriginal women make up about 4 per cent of the Canadian population yet account for 16 per cent of female homicides.

“When we lose one woman, we lose a part of our own souls,” said Chantal Chagnon, of the Muskeg Lake Nation.

As members of various First Nations spoke and performed traditional songs, a book was passed around to gather messages of condolence for the Gladue family.

Anna Coe, the mother of a Metis daughter, said she attended the vigil to hope for better for future generations of First Nations’ women.

“It’s nice to see that people have come out to support a different answer,” Coe said.

In a release, Chief Crown prosecutor Michelle Doyle called Gladue’s death “shocking and appalling.”

The Crown’s appeal notice cites mistakes the judge made during his charge to the jury, including his instructions about how Barton could have been found guilty of manslaughter.

Barton’s lawyer, Dino Bottos, said while he respects the protesters, they did not attend the month-long trial. If they had, he said, they likely would have agreed with the jury.

“What they’ve done is they’ve taken this case and tried to hold it up as an example of how aboriginal women or aboriginal people are mistreated by the criminal justice system,” Bottos said.

“The jury in this case spent a day and a half deliberating. And it’s unfair to them to suggest that their verdict was misguided or based on race.”

Direct Link: <http://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/demonstrators-demand-justice-for-aboriginal-women-following-court-verdict>

Drag the Red efforts ramping up in Winnipeg

Manitobans to drag Red River again to find missing, murdered aboriginal women

By Chinta Puxley, The Canadian Press Posted: Apr 05, 2015 12:02 PM CT Last Updated: Apr 05, 2015 12:02 PM CT



Drag the Red began Sept. 17, 2014 with volunteers on both the water and shore. Those in the boats dropped metal bars and hooks about four metres deep and trolled the river, while those on the bank combed through the grass, trees and scrub. (CBC)

A group of volunteers plan to dredge the Red River again this year, hoping to find anything that will bring closure to the families of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Bernadette Smith, whose sister Claudette Osborne went missing seven years ago, spearheaded the search last year after the body of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine was found in the river wrapped in a bag.

Volunteers went out on boats with hooks that combed the bottom of the river that flows through Winnipeg, hoping to dig up clues about women who have vanished.

This year, Smith said the operation is more sophisticated. The dragging bars are better made and Smith has bought a boat out of her own pocket.



Bernadette Smith's sister Claudette Osborne disappeared in 2008 and hasn't been seen since. (CBC)

The group is also fundraising for another boat and rain gear through a GoFundMe webpage.

But the intent is the same — to get answers for the loved ones of those who have gone missing or been murdered. Last year, Smith said seven bodies were pulled from the water.

"That's the highest ever in a year — four while we were dragging," Smith said.

"We weren't the ones that pulled the bodies out but we felt like our dragging efforts had something to do with those bodies being dislodged and those loved ones being brought home."

Relatives of these missing women often feel helpless, Smith said.

When her sister went missing, Smith said a busload of volunteers gathered to search for her because police didn't seem to be doing enough. Years later, Smith is still searching for answers.

Getting out on the river gives many a sense of purpose and community, she said. It shows that the lives of the estimated 1,200 missing and murdered aboriginal women have meaning.

"It's very empowering to be doing this kind of work," she said. "It's getting people up off the couch to say I can make a difference."

For Kyle Kematch, like so many of the searchers, the work is personal. His sister, Amber Guiboche, went missing without a trace in 2010. Kematch quit his job last year to devote all his time to dragging the river.

Every time his hooks hit a snag, Kematch's heart leaps into his throat. As much as he wants to bring closure to grieving families, "your mind starts going all over the place," he said.

"I pray that I don't find her in there."

The group wants Winnipeg police to do more than just monitor the volunteers from a boat and actually join in the search. So far, police have declined, saying only that they will support the group "from a safety standpoint."

Both Smith and Kematch said they will continue going out on the river every year for as long as it takes, with or without the police.

"We know that Tina Fontaine's body wasn't the first one found in the river," Smith said. "We don't know how many are in there. We're going to continue as long as we can."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/drag-the-red-efforts-ramping-up-in-winnipeg-1.3021834>

Who are Saskatchewan's missing and murdered indigenous women?

Unsolved Sask. cases continue to haunt family members, stump investigators

By Merelda Fiddler, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 06, 2015 5:30 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 06, 2015 10:57 AM CT



Melanie Dawn Geddes was 24 years old. She had three children.

Margaret Blackbird, Naomi Desjarlais, Danita Bigeagle, and Janine Wesaquate are just a few of the 33 names of women who either went missing or were murdered in Saskatchewan and whose cases may never be solved.

Among these names is Melanie Dawn Geddes. The 24-year-old mother of three disappeared walking about four blocks to her home in north central Regina, in the early morning hours of Aug. 13, 2005. Four months later, her remains were found north of the city in a field. In the time between Melanie's disappearance and the discovery of her remains her mother, Valerie Smokeyday said the days all blended together.



This is a picture of Amber Redman attending a powwow, one of her favourite past times. (Dana McNabb Benjoe, Facebook)

"It was very blurry," Smokeyday said. "Some of it I remember and some of it I don't because it was so hard."

With each ground search, largely organized by family, Smokeyday said she'd pause before looking under a shrub or in a hole because the fear of finding her daughter was almost more than she could take. As the days dragged on into weeks and then months, Smokeyday knew something was terribly wrong because Melanie would never leave her three daughters.

After Melanie's remains were discovered, the focus shifted to Melanie's daughters and making sure they were properly supported.

To date, no one has ever been charged with her murder and the Geddes family has been living with a cloud over their heads, questions they fear will never be answered.

"I just want justice to be served," Melanie's oldest daughter, 17-year-old Katie Cleveland said. "I want to find out who did that and ask why they did that to her."

There is also frustration. Several officers and two different police departments have been involved Melanie's case. It's also been more than a year since Valerie Smokeyday has heard from police about what might be happening in her daughter's case.

"It felt like after we buried her that nobody cared. We went to a couple of the conferences and stuff that they had and after that it just died."

A grassroots movement

Lori Whiteman was teaching on Standing Buffalo First Nation, her home community, when one of her former students went missing. Amber Redman disappeared in July 2005, just one month before Melanie Dawn Geddes. Whiteman, shocked by her disappearance, reached out to Redman's mother, Gwenda Yuzicappi.



Danita Bigeagle went missing in 2007 and hasn't been found yet. (CBC)

Whiteman could relate. Whiteman's mother had disappeared in the mid-1980s and it had taken years to get her case on the books. Yuzicappi invited Whiteman to a meeting in Ottawa where the Native Women's Association of Canada was gathering the families of missing and murdered women together.

"I was really thankful for that opportunity," Whiteman remembers. "But it was a little bit overwhelming because I really hadn't talked to anybody because I thought at the time who would I talk to about this, who would care, who would listen."

Turns out a lot of people. At the meeting, Whiteman gathered with Yuzicappi, Pauline Muskego, whose daughter Dahleen was murdered, and Myrna LaPlante, whose aunt had also gone missing. They realized their cases were not isolated, not in their home province of Saskatchewan. In fact, there was a much larger trend going on in Canada.

From there, these women founded some of the early grassroots movements and tried to raise awareness that their mothers, sisters, daughters and friends were disappearing and being murdered and some of those cases were going unsolved. They also tried to make the larger community see that the missing posters and ground searches making the nightly news were not one-off, random crimes. Each story was indicative of a much bigger problem.

Whiteman also credits social media.

"Suddenly, you had a space where you had a national, an international, global audience to the things that were of interest and urgency to you. You could have pictures of people. I just prompted widespread sharing."

The community responds

Today, the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women is widely known. But in Saskatchewan in particular, the way these cases are being handled has changed and continues to change.

Sgt. Ken Palen is the head of the Historical Case Unit for the RCMP in Saskatoon. It handles all of the cases in the northern half of the province. Palen himself has been part of the unit since about 2007 and many things have changed in his time there.



Melanie Dawn Geddes poses for a photo at her graduation.

He says in the 1960s and 1970s a missing person's case would be added to the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) for about six months. If it wasn't solved, it would then be removed from the system. DNA did not really come into use until the 1980s.

Today, DNA is critical and the smallest samples can break the biggest cases. Police also have criminal profiling, geographic profiling, forensic pathology and statement analysis as well as Violent Criminal Linkage System (ViCLAS). Saskatchewan also has a Missing Persons Taskforce, which resulted in the Saskatchewan Association Chiefs of Police website, a site regularly updated with all missing persons.

Sgt. Palen said his unit now gets involved at the beginning of a missing person's file. They ensure that every effort is made to find a missing person and that things like dental records, DNA and other evidence is gathered and kept in case the does turn cold.

"I was trying to reduce the amount of long term missing," Sgt. Palen said. "Since we've been doing our reviews we have not had any long term missing persons added to our provincial website from the RCMP side of things."

Still, the cases continue to roll in, from drownings, to found human remains, missing persons, homicides and suspicious deaths. Sgt. Palen estimates his unit receives about 15

news cases per year and clears about seven, which is why officer placements in the unit have been extended from three to five years, to five to eight years. Part of their job is to select which case is next, and there is a system.

"Picture an escalator and a box going up one each step. And each member of our unit has an investigation or two that are on that escalator. As we all focus on, like we work together as a team on one or two investigations at a time," Palen said. "And once that investigation gets to the top of the escalator and its furthered either through charges or there's resolution in some other way. The next case grows life and away it goes."

The families

For those still waiting for resolution, there is a mix of frustration and acceptance.

Moving on with life is important. Until recently, two of Melanie Dawn Geddes' daughters lived with their grandmother, Valerie Smokeyday. Melanie's oldest daughter, Katie, is now living on her own, raising her own daughter, Dustina. The beautiful, happy 18-month-old is a reminder that her grandmother has left a real legacy in children and now grandchildren.

Smokeyday wants people to remember that Melanie's killer or killers remain at large and that her case needs solving.

For others, like Lori Whiteman, she knows the likelihood of her mother's case being solved, is slim. It's not clear where Delores Whiteman went missing or even when exactly.

"I'm no longer at that point where I feel this bitterness and towards law enforcement because they're not doing their job," Whiteman said. "Because I understand, in my mind I understand they don't have the manpower, they don't have the training, they until recently really didn't have an idea of even the stats and extent of how much this is happening across the country — although they probably could have and should have."

Whiteman said she has had to find a way to make peace with her situation. She has left it up to a higher power, and says she is now prepared to hear the answers should they ever present themselves. Whiteman said what is encouraging is the next generation of young women, keeping this issue alive and ensuring that missing and murdered indigenous women are remembered, honoured and that future generations will be less vulnerable.

If you know anything about these cases, or any other missing persons cases, call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/who-are-saskatchewan-s-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-1.3010508>

Men's role in solving the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women

Organizers say not enough men showing support

By Ryan Pilon, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 07, 2015 5:30 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 07, 2015 11:48 AM CT

Lani Elliott was 21 years old when she survived a vicious attack by her husband, who beat her with a baseball bat and broke her leg.

Elliott is now telling her story to First Nations and in schools, raising awareness of how often domestic abuse plays a role in the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women.

According to a report released by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police last year entitled "Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Review", 92 per cent of the women knew their attackers:

- 29 per cent — Spouse
- 23 per cent — Other Family Member
- 10 per cent — Other Intimate
- 30 per cent — Acquaintance
- 8 per cent — Stranger



Lani Elliott speaks about domestic violence to students at the Bert Fox Community High School in Fort Qu'Appelle. (CBC)

"It's almost like people want to believe that a lot of the violence that's happening, the perpetrators are strangers, and maybe that's the case for some of them, but we can't ignore the fact that domestic violence, relationship violence is a huge contributing factor to these women going missing," Elliott said.

'Good men, healthy men, have got to step up and teach men what a healthy man is again.'- *Conrad Burns*

Despite 89 per cent of the perpetrators being men, Elliott said a lot of men don't want to talk about the issue. She's had speeches cancelled last minute and male leaders sending female representatives instead.

"It's sad to say but there's a lot of push back," Elliott said. "In my mind, it tells me this is an issue they don't want to talk about."

Several organizations have agreed that not enough men are showing up to support women at missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW) events.

There are exceptions, however. Conrad Burns is helping set up a week-long event in Prince Albert to create awareness about abuse towards women.

"Traditionally, women controlled the community. They were in charge," Burns said. "We've lost that. As a man, my role, traditionally, is to support a woman in any given single way possible ... women give birth to us. Women help us develop ourselves. Women feed us and clothe us, and pass on their knowledge, and take their time to care for us. And somewhere along that way some men think they become punching bags."

Burns admitted it can be tough to get other men involved, because he said some of them would promise to take part in an event, but then they'd never show up.



Conrad Burns is helping set up a week-long event in Prince Albert to raise awareness about abuse towards women. (Ryan Pilon/CBC)

"Getting guys involved in Prince Albert, I know there's a lot of amazing guys out there, and they're all busy doing their own things, sometimes it's hard to focus on something else, because everyone's got their own struggles."

Worse than not showing up are those who are opposed to the cause completely, such as a man who responded on Facebook when Burns posted that people need to respect women.

"A man, I don't even know where he's from, stated right away, 'Just because you posted this I'm going to hit a woman today'."

Despite the struggles to get his message across, Burns still believes that more men will join the cause.

"Good men, healthy men, have got to step up and teach men what a healthy man is again," Burns said. "If men don't stand up, they're continuing to cycle. And the cycle of abuse is not good for anyone."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/men-s-role-in-solving-the-issue-of-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-1.3015295>

Sagkeeng First Nation has most unsolved cases of missing or murdered indigenous women

First Nation near Winnipeg has six cases of slain women

[CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 09, 2015 4:30 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 09, 2015 12:07 PM CT

Manitoba's Sagkeeng First Nation has the highest number of cases of unsolved missing or murdered indigenous women in Canada, according to a CBC analysis of outstanding cases

The community of 3,000 people, about 120 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg, has six cases of slain women. Manitoba has 46 unsolved cases overall.

The cases from Sagkeeng are:

- Tina Fontaine: Her body was pulled from the Red River in August 2014.
- Fonessa Bruyere: She was found dead on the outskirts of Winnipeg in August 2007.
- Glenda Morrisseau: Her beaten body was found in St. Boniface in 1991.
- Moira Erb: She was found dead in a remote area between railway tracks in northwest Winnipeg in 2003.

- Kelly Morrisseau: Glenda Morrisseau's niece was found naked, dying of stab wounds in Gatineau, Que., in 2006.
- Crystal Saunders: Her body was dumped in a ditch in St. Ambroise in 2007.

The community has started using sharing circles in an attempt to heal.

Janet Bruyere, Fonessa's grandmother, met Tina Fontaine's great-aunt Thelma Favel at a sharing circle in January. They bonded over the deaths of two young girls.

"The pain is still there. It will never go away, and it still hurts me," Bruyere said.

Favel is outspoken about how Child and Family Services and the Winnipeg police didn't protect her great-niece.

"If they were doing their job, would Tina still be here? And they failed her that night. All those agencies failed her," Favel said.

Both Fonessa and Tina struggled with high-risk lifestyles in Winnipeg before they were killed.

Of 110 families of missing and murdered indigenous women that CBC talked to, nearly three-quarters of them said their relatives had been exploited in the sex-trade, hitchhiked or had drug and alcohol addictions.

Lillian Cook said so many Sagkeeng teens get into trouble because Winnipeg is close by.

"It is easy to get there, and you see people hitchhiking, and you see our young people hitchhiking, and it's dangerous. it's really dangerous," Cook said.

Favel and Bruyere were brought together in the sharing circle by Cook, and CBC caught up with all three women in Sagkeeng.

"[Bruyere] knows what I'm going through. We both experienced the same loss in the same way. Both our granddaughters were murdered, and there is still no answers," Favel said.

The women said there need to be more opportunities for youth in Sagkeeng and less involvement with Child and Family Services.

"Work with the families first before apprehension," Favel said.

Cook added, "What if they were to finish high school, and there was some kind of program in Sagkeeng, like a beauty school, or to do their nails? That would change their life, and that gives them something to look forward to that's actually in Sagkeeng."

Sagkeeng's newly elected Chief Derek Henderson said families are already involved in a pilot project called the Circle of Care.

The First Nation is working with the province to develop the program and help families take preventive steps so children don't have to be removed from their community.

The women said there needs to be healing now — starting with their own.

"We have some kind of closure because we know where they are now, and we know they're safe, but what about all those other families that have no answers yet, who are still looking?" Favel said.

Bruyere said that at first it was hard to talk about.

"I was scared, and I was nervous, and then I heard other people talk about their people and their kids, what happened to them, and I learned from there. But sometimes I break down. But that lady told us it's OK to break down a little bit to help you out. and you become stronger," Bruyere said.

These women now say they've formed a lifelong bond, and they are inviting others to join them.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/sagkeeng-first-nation-has-most-unsolved-cases-of-missing-or-murdered-indigenous-women-1.3025156>

Families of missing and murdered indigenous women give police a failing grade

CBC probes 230 unsolved cases, interviews 110 families

[CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 08, 2015 3:00 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 08, 2015 3:17 PM CT

Police departments across Canada get a failing grade for their efforts at solving cases of missing and murdered indigenous women, according to CBC interviews with more than 110 family members.

CBC News has embarked on an exhaustive search for families who have lost a relative either to an unsolved killing or whose loved one still remains missing.

So far, more than 110 families have responded to questions ranging from the efficacy of police investigations to the need for a national inquiry.

Families were asked to rate the quality of the police investigation in each case, on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being excellent. The average rating was 2.8.



Katie Ballantyne was killed in Edmonton in 2003. Her case remains unsolved. (Supplied)

"I think all the murder cases of high-risk people, whether you're white or whether you're an Indian or whether you're Spanish ... you're treated like scum," says Victoria Merasty, mother of 40-year-old Katie Ballantyne who was killed in Edmonton in 2003. Her case remains unsolved.

"I feel like the police are not taking interest in anything that has anything to do with the aboriginal people," said Maria Pia Benuen, whose best friend Henrietta Millek disappeared from St. John's in 1982. The case has also never been solved.

CBC News has identified about 230 examples of unsolved murders and missing person cases among indigenous women and girls, stretching back to 1951.

British Columbia has the highest number of unsolved incidents, at 65. Alberta is second with 51 cases, followed by Manitoba with 46 and Saskatchewan with 29.

First time anyone called

Many family members and friends of missing and murdered women said the call from CBC News was the first time they had been contacted about their relative.



Nancy Dumas disappeared in Lynn Lake, MB., in 1987. Her case remains unsolved. (Supplied)

Community leaders had a similar response.

"This is the first time anyone has ever called me in regards to what's happened to aboriginal people in the town of Lynn Lake," said Chief Andrew Colomb, leader of the Marcel Colomb First Nation, near Lynn Lake, Man.

Nancy Dumas disappeared in Lynn Lake in 1987 and her case remains unsolved.

"Somewhat, you've given me some confidence and some spirits up here," Colomb said.

About 70 per cent of family members expressed the desire for a national inquiry into the issue, a call that has so far been rejected by the federal government.

"This is the first time anyone has ever called me in regards to what's happened to aboriginal people in the town of Lynn Lake"- *Chief Andrew Colomb of the Marcel Colomb First Nation, near Lynn Lake*

Of the cases where the age of the women is known, about one-quarter of those that are still unsolved involve individuals under the age of 20, according to the CBC data.

The cases identified by CBC span 63 years, with the oldest incident being the 1951 disappearance of Margaret Blackbird in Saskatchewan. Blackbird was 21 when she went missing from Loon Lake, never to be seen again.

Of the cases where CBC was able to locate and interview family members, and where the family members or police knew the lifestyle of their relative, 60 per cent say their relatives were involved in high-risk activities like sex-trade work, hitchhiking or serious drug and alcohol use.

Praise and dismay

While some family members praised the efforts of police, many others expressed dismay that officers dismissed their concerns because of the lifestyle of their relatives.

In many cases, police couldn't be initially convinced to initiate a missing person's investigation.



Fonessa Bruyere was 17 when she was killed in Winnipeg in 2007. (Supplied)

Crystal Bruyere is a cousin of Fonessa Bruyere, who was 17 when she was killed in Winnipeg in 2007. She said her grandmother was rebuffed when she first went to police.

"Oh, she's just a prostitute, she's probably just on a binge, she'll come home," was the police response, according to Bruyere.

Of the families CBC News interviewed, nearly 70 per cent said their relative went missing or was found dead in an urban area (an area with a population greater than 10,000).

While a number of police task forces have been at work for years trying to solve cold cases, there has been little progress.

An integrated police task force in Manitoba, which eventually became Project Devote, has solved one case in the last five years.

Project Kare in Alberta has been able to secure three convictions since it began its work of looking into sex trade worker homicides in the Edmonton area in 2003.

'Not given the resources necessary'

In British Columbia, the Highway of Tears task force has been able to solve one case and make an additional arrest in one other incident since 2005, when it began looking into unsolved murders with links to Highway 16 between Prince George and Prince Rupert.

Ray Michalko, an RCMP officer turned private investigator in Vancouver, said police could have done more on many cases.

"I know as far as Highway of Tears cases, police officers themselves have said, had they had the resources and manpower, that they could have solved some of these cases at the time," Michalko said.

'Oh, she's just a prostitute, she's probably just on a binge, she'll come home'- *Crystal Bruyere, cousin of Fonessa Bruyere, describing police response*

"It seems to me in a number of cases ... the officers on the road wanted to solve the cases. It's not like they didn't do anything because they were prejudiced, they wanted to do something, but were not given the resources necessary to accomplish the job by someone up the chain of command."

RCMP Staff Sgt. Wayne Clary, head of the Highway of Tears task force, said he understands the frustrations of families.

"We get rapped on the chin for all different things. And a lot of them — some are justified, but a lot aren't, and we can't come back to clear it up because that's kind of the way we are."

Clary said the burden of proof means suspicions and suspects aren't enough.

"I have worked on files in the past, I am not going to say which ones, where we know exactly who did it," he said. "And we just can't freakin' prove it. And it's frustrating."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/families-of-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-give-police-a-failing-grade-1.3022709>

Parenting First Nations children in a world of risk

Single mom Brandy Maxie knows her children face risks because of their race

By Madeline Kotzer, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 08, 2015 6:00 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 08, 2015 2:09 PM CT

Brandy Maxie said she vividly remembers the first time her daughter, Valyncia Sparvier, understood the danger she faced because she is aboriginal.

Maxie was at an outdoor fitness class at a school in Regina. Her three children were playing nearby at the school's park. A man in a red truck pulled up and parked near the children.

She said she watched in terror as the man tried to lure her young daughter to the car.



Valyncia Sparvier, 11, is Brandy Maxie's eldest and only daughter. (CBC News)

"Valyncia, she is so protective, so she immediately grabbed her brothers and went closer to the school building and was calling for me," she said of the experience.

"We had the discussion; sometimes people will follow you because you are a native girl."

Maxie said as her daughter grew older, she began to ask questions about what it meant to be a "missing or murdered indigenous woman". She was honest and told her daughter about the women they knew who were missing.

Maxie's cousin Danita Bigeagle went missing almost 10 years ago in Regina. And five-year-old Tamra Keepness, who disappeared in Regina in 2004, was also from their home reserve, White Bear First Nation.

"Your physical appearance, just being native, is going to put you at a higher risk for certain things than a non-First Nations person and that's just the way it is right now," Maxie said of her conversation with Valyncia.

This year, Sparvier wrote an award-winning speech about the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women. Initially the speech was an assignment for her Grade 6 class. Now, the pre-teen is speaking at events across the province, aimed at raising awareness about the issue.

Maxie said she believes it is important that her daughter learns to have her own voice, but she does not want her to live in fear.

"I have lived in fear. I have been a victim. I don't identify with it anymore but a lot of my parenting comes from my past experiences."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/parenting-first-nations-children-in-a-world-of-risk-1.3020357>

Special Topic: Residential Schools

Commissioner recalls reconciliation hearings

By Betty Ann Adam, The StarPhoenix April 4, 2015



Commissioner Marie Wilson reflected on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings at Station 20 West Wednesday in Saskatoon.

After hearing the truths of residential school survivors at seven national events in the last five years, commissioner Marie Wilson visited Saskatoon this week.

She reflected on the hearings and legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada, which winds down with closing ceremonies in Ottawa from May 31 to June 3. The commission's job was to try to teach the country and inspire ongoing individual and collective reconciliation, she said.

Learning our lesson

"What in God's name were we thinking when we were rounding up all these little kids and putting them in places that many have described as incarceration institutions and leaving them there with so little support, either spiritual or material or family. And leaving them there for so long and then expecting the people back home and the children to come out of that in a positive way?" Wilson asked.

Documenting history

"Survivors shared expertise that no one else has. The first-hand story of what they lived through ... It's not filtered, it's not second-hand. It's the living memory, the living statements of 7,000 people. There is so much individual detail, while at the same time so much common story that there is absolutely no way anyone can deny those elements that were recurring, that were repeated ... there was a recurring thread in every denominational school, in every region and every period."

Broken love bond

"'When we were taken away from our homes the way that we were, the love bond was cut,' one person said. So many had a sense that they were not loved, holding that as children, because if they were, why wouldn't someone come and get them out of this hell hole? Because they were not raised in an environment that personalized them, but institutionalized them ... they became incapable of expressing love themselves," Wilson said.

"One of the most common phrases I heard over and over was, 'I am not proud of the way I raised my children. I didn't know better because of how I was raised. But I am hopeful things can change for my grandchildren.' There is a bond that we need to invest in restoring, rebuilding."

Prisons see the results

The commission visited prisons around the country, where one person said the easiest transition from residential school was going into prison and the hardest was going home.

Allies needed

The TRC's first national event in Winnipeg in 2010 attracted tens of thousands of people, of whom about 10 per cent were non-indigenous, Wilson said. As the stories of the children made their way into the public consciousness, more non-indigenous citizens were drawn to the events.

At the last one, in Edmonton, 60 per cent of attendees were nonindigenous.

"It's a hopeful sign because we need allies, we need friends. This is a struggle. This is not feel-nice work. These are hard-fought gains.

We're talking about changes that are going to mean some people are going to feel fearful on both sides of our shared community," Wilson said.

Non-indigenous shame

"There is tremendous heart in our country ... Almost all the non-indigenous people who have spoken to me feel deep shame and guilt about this," Wilson said. "And also anger that they didn't know about this. They weren't taught any of it. They were allowed to be completely blind to it growing up, and that has to stop. We need to have schools that stop investing in our shared ignorance of each other."

Conversation must continue

"It's not a moment of conversation that we need," Wilson said. "It's a continuing and unfolding conversation, so that people can increasingly feel safe ... increasingly feel encouraged by the words of other people to dig down into their own deepest stories and unload the stuff that has been parked inside and has been dragging people down and around for decades ... and becoming more than just 'issue pals,' but becoming people who know and have heart for each other."

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/Commissioner+recalls+reconciliation+hearings/10945592/story.html>

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

How Native Americans Shaped Washington, D.C.

[Jason Steinhauer / The John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress](#)

April 1, 2015



Chris Maddaloni—Roll Call Photos / Getty Images Melissa Mederos, 10, from Miami, Fla., looks at the Baptism of Pocahontas by John Gadsby Chapman in the Rotunda of the Capitol.

The story the region tells of its first inhabitants is a complicated one

This post is in collaboration with [The John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress](#), which brings together scholars and researchers from around the world to use the Library's rich collections. The article below was originally published on the Kluge Center blog with the title [The Indians' Capital City: Native Histories of Washington, D.C.](#)

As a Kluge Fellow at the Library of Congress, historian Joseph Genetin-Pilawa is researching his forthcoming book “The Indians’ Capital City: ‘Secret’ Native Histories of Washington, D.C.” He sat down with Jason Steinhauer to discuss the facts, myths, and contradictions of Native presence in the nation’s capital.

The Chesapeake has a rich indigenous history that predates the creation of Washington, D.C. What societies were here before the birth of modern-day Washington?

The human history of the region goes back thousands of years. Groups organized themselves into stratified political units known now as chiefdoms, developed military and political alliances, and practiced religious and spiritual ceremonies aimed at giving thanks and keeping the world in balance. They were all part of the massive Algonquian language that spanned the east coast, up through the Great Lakes and Canada, and even stretched to the Great Plains and part of present-day California. Although the distinct languages were related, they were not mutually intelligible.

The primary Native group that inhabited the area between the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers was and continues to be the Piscataway, along with several related groups, including the Anacostank, Pamunkey, Mattapanient, Nangemeick, and Tauxehent.

You've asserted that Native peoples played a significant role in shaping Washington, D.C. Can you elaborate on what you mean by that?

In my forthcoming book, I write about the perceived incongruity of Native people in urban spaces—that the Native past must give way to an urban future, and that they're mutually exclusive. This incongruity is rooted in Washington, D.C. especially due to the creation of a commemorative landscape—centered in the art and architecture of federal buildings, but dispersed around the city as well—that iterated notions of pacification, of a conquest completed, and of vanishing Indians.

The artwork in the rotunda of the Capitol Building, for example, focuses on Native people assimilating (like Pocahontas), signing land treaties (William Penn and the Delaware), and being subjugated (Daniel Boone fighting Indians). My book argues that, unlike the Native subjects of capital art and architecture though, Indigenous visitors and inhabitants engaged with non-Native individuals and the symbols of settler society in Washington, carved out their own space(s) within it, and claimed or reclaimed an ownership of the place.

The presence of Natives in Washington in the first half of the 19th century coincided with removal of Native tribes from their homelands in the South and West. How do you interpret this tension between Natives being welcomed in Washington while Washington elected officials evicted Natives nationwide? Was that tension felt at the time?

That's certainly a big part of what attracted me to this project. Much of the early artwork in the city was created and installed in the 1830s, '40s, and '50s, to support and justify the removal and reservation policies being simultaneously crafted by Congress and the Presidents. Yet, hundreds and thousands of Indian delegates were in the city concurrently. White Washingtonians told themselves one story on their walls and in their paintings, a story of a completed conquest and vanishing Indians, yet experienced an entirely different story in their everyday lives as they encountered actual Native people all over the city.

From the perspective of the Native visitors themselves, the tension was not so much about the representation versus the reality, but about resisting the very representations themselves. That process started in the earliest days of the city and continues to the present...

Click [here](#) to read the rest of the interview, [at the Kluge Center blog](#).

Joseph Genetin-Pilawa is Assistant Professor at George Mason University. His first book is "Crooked Paths to Allotment: The Fight over Federal Indian Policy after the Civil War." Genetin-Pilawa lectures on the history of Native Americans in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, April 2nd at 4 p.m. at the Kluge Center.

Direct Link: <http://time.com/3764272/native-history-washington-d-c/>

Native American Veteran Caregiver Nationally Recognized

[Vincent Schilling](#)

4/2/15

Tobian Kills in Water, an advocate for Native veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and a caregiver to her injured veteran husband Craig, has been named as a national advocate on behalf of military and veteran caregivers by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. She is the first Elizabeth Dole Fellow to represent Native Americans.

According to a release, Kills in Water was selected as part of the 2015 class of fellows and represents her state of South Dakota. As an advocate, Kills in Water will share her story, experiences, and resources with other caregivers in need and have the opportunities to travel to Washington, D.C. to speak with lawmakers on behalf of military families affected by PTSD and TBI.

Kills in Water told ICTMN that she is thrilled to have been named an advocate for the Dole Foundation. But she is also thankful to share her experience with other veterans and their families who may be unaware of the benefits available for families who leave the military.

"I am so excited," says Kills in Water. "When my husband retired in 2012 and when we came out of the military, it was crazy because we did not know anything about benefits that were out there or things that could help us. We were lost."

"This is the whole reason I am doing this. We figured out that we are not the only ones that need help. Now that I am back in college – I am meeting with other caregiving wives and they are in similar situations. They too are lost like we were."

In 2014, Elizabeth Dole Fellows provided insight and advice about challenges encountered by military caregivers and their families during face to face meetings with the White House, the Department of Veterans Affairs, more than 100 Members of Congress, and dozens of leaders in the public, private, nonprofit, labor and faith communities.

In 2015, Kills in Water will be among the Fellows at the Elizabeth Dole Foundation who will serve as a representative for Native American families and Native veterans.

“Our Fellows are the heart and soul of our Foundation’s work,” former North Carolina Senator Elizabeth Dole said in the release. “The wisdom of their personal experience is invaluable, and it helps guide the focus of our National Coalition. I am personally grateful that these hidden heroes would add to the selfless service they already provide as caregivers by volunteering to represent the millions of their peers in need of better support from our nation.”

Kills in Water told ICTMN she has heard a lot of troubling stories and she desires to help them in every way possible.

“So many other women and families are out there in the world that have come back from serving in the military – and I know three personally – have told me troubling stories,” said Kills in Water. “One woman said that when they returned from the military, they had to live in a basement for three months until they could get their benefits going and figure out the system.

“We lived with my sister and she had six kids. It was tough to get back on our feet again, because we did not anticipate how fast the out-processing was going to go. We had money saved up, but it is hard to transition so suddenly. But to do it with the military member who has injuries is even more difficult. This was a big motivation for me to get involved.”

Kills in Water says that after she got out of the military along with her husband who suffered from PTSD and other injuries – she started researching as much as possible to find help. She says she intends to share her knowledge with other Native families who will benefit from her knowledge.

“At first I joined as many caregiver groups as I could possibly find. I stalked everyone to get information. In one Facebook group, they talked about the Elizabeth Dole foundation – so I researched it and applied to be a fellow.”

After several interviews including one on Skype, Kills in Water says she was thrilled to be named a fellow to help other families in need. Her desires now are to get resources into one place and share her knowledge with others.

“In my interviews I expressed that my goal was to go to reservations and do outreach on a personal level,” she said. “I really hope to work to get all of these resources in one spot.”

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/02/native-american-veteran-caregiver-nationally-recognized-159853>

Federal Judge Says South Dakota Officials Violated Native American Families' Rights

March 31, 2015 6:26 PM ET

Two of South Dakota's largest tribes won a sweeping victory in federal court that could reverberate for tribes across the country.

A federal judge has [ruled](#) that the state Department of Social Services, prosecutors and judges "failed to protect Indian parents' fundamental rights" when they removed their children after short hearings and placed them largely in white foster care.

According to the suit, some of the hearings lasted less than 60 seconds. The suit says some parents were not allowed to speak at the hearings or in some cases hear why their children were being removed.

"In the past four years alone, hundreds of Indian children have been forcibly removed from their homes and subjected to these judicial hearings," says Stephen Pevar, a staff attorney with the ACLU which brought the case along with South Dakota attorney Dana Hanna on behalf of the Oglala Sioux and Rosebud Sioux tribes.

"It's no wonder that the social services won a hundred percent of those hearings," he says. "All the cards were stacked in their favor."

Congress passed the federal Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978 in an effort to keep native families and tribes together. It mandates that the state place native children with their relatives or tribes if they have to be removed from their parents.

But in South Dakota that hasn't always happened. More than 80 percent of native children are placed in white foster homes. In 2011, [NPR found](#) that the state was routinely placing children in non-native homes, even when native homes and relatives were available.

One of the biggest complaints of native families who lost children is that they were never allowed to present their side.

Federal Chief Judge Jeffrey Viken agreed with them, writing, "Indian children, parents and tribes deserve better."

South Dakota state officials declined to comment. Tony Venhuizen, chief of staff to Gov. Dennis Daugaard said in an email, "We would decline to comment on pending litigation."

The Department of Social Services did not respond to requests for comment.

Abbie Smith, a government affairs associate for the National Indian Child Welfare Association, says the ruling will change the way courts nationwide treat these cases.

"It sets up a road map for other areas in the country where we know there is disregard for the rights of parents and tribes," Smith says.

"I take literally thousands of phone calls a year from parents and tribes, grandmas and aunts who describe to me court hearings that sound as if they were lifted out of the transcript that was included in the complaint in this case," she says. "A victory like this in South Dakota will send a message loud and clear that these laws and these civil rights are not optional."

Chase Iron Eyes is a staff attorney with the Lakota people's Law Project which has been fighting this issue in the state for more than 10 years. He says grandmothers and relatives who were denied custody of their grandchildren feel vindicated.

"We have a right to the control and wellbeing and development of our children," he says. "Our basic existence depends on them."

Pevar says the tribes will work with the Department of Justice and the courts to develop guidelines for South Dakota and other states as well. He says they will take up a final piece of the lawsuit — the Department of Social Services and its training of employees — next.

Direct Link: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2015/03/31/396664863/federal-judge-says-south-dakota-officials-violated-native-american-families-right>

AP: As Supreme Court weighs gay marriage, some Native American tribes dig in against it



In this Jan. 25, 2014 photo provided by Jerry Archuleta, Alray Nelson, left, and Brennen Yonnie, right, pose for a photo at the flea market in Gallup, N.M. The couple has been advocating to have a Navajo Nation law that prohibits same-sex marriages repealed. (AP Photo/Jerry Archuleta)

Associated Press April 6, 2015 | 6:40 p.m. EDT

By JONATHAN DREW and FELICIA FONSECA, Associated Press

Even if a U.S. Supreme Court ruling this spring makes same-sex marriage the law, it would leave pockets of the country where it isn't likely to be recognized any time soon: the reservations of a handful of sovereign Native American tribes, including the nation's two largest.

Since 2011, as the number of states recognizing such unions spiked to 37, at least six smaller tribes have revisited and let stand laws that define marriage as being between a man and a woman, according to an Associated Press review of tribal records. In all, tribes with a total membership approaching 1 million won't recognize marriages between two men or two women.

Several explicitly declare that same-sex marriages are prohibited. And some have even toughened their stance.

In December, just weeks after North Carolina began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, the state's Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians updated its law to add language preventing gay couples from having marriage ceremonies performed on tribal land. The

resolution changing the law, which passed 8-1, says court cases around the country prompted the tribe of about 13,000 enrolled members to review its own laws.

The Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma and the Navajo Nation, with about 300,000 members each, maintain decade-old laws that don't recognize same-sex marriage. Neither tribe has shown much sign of shifting.

Alray Nelson, a gay rights activist who lives with his partner Brennen Yonnie on the Navajo reservation, said the tribe's law denies same-sex couples the right to be included in decisions on a partner's health care, or to share in a home site lease. Getting a marriage license would only require a short drive to a courthouse off the reservation, but the couple — both enrolled Navajo members — would rather wait until it's allowed on the reservation.

"We are both planning to build a life here, and we want to raise a family," he said. "So it's not an option for us to remove ourselves from our community."

As with the states, opposition to gay marriage varies among tribes. At least 10 have recognized same-sex marriage, often well ahead of their surrounding states and without having judges force their hands. Many others are neutral.

The Supreme Court will hear arguments April 28 and could decide by June whether gay couples can marry in the remaining states and U.S. territories where it's not allowed. But while 27 states that allow gay marriage got dragged over the threshold by judges, the sovereign status of federally recognized tribes means a Supreme Court ruling wouldn't directly affect their laws.

Cherokee officials in Oklahoma and North Carolina say nothing in their laws prevents members from getting marriage licenses in adjacent counties. The Oklahoma-based Cherokee Nation, which has a separate government and laws from the Eastern Band, passed its marriage law in 2004.

The Navajo Nation Council voted in 2005 to ban same-sex marriages on the 27,000 square-mile reservation that extends into Arizona, New Mexico and Utah — all states where such marriages are legal. Then-President Joe Shirley Jr. vetoed the measure, but lawmakers overturned it.

There's been no push recently among tribal lawmakers to change that, said council spokesman Jared Touchin.

The Osage Nation, bordering Tulsa, Oklahoma, passed a wide-ranging marriage law in 2012 that doesn't recognize same-sex unions.

John Hawk Co-Cke' (co-KAY), an enrolled member of the Osage Nation who's gay, said that before reservations were created, many tribes had no problem with men who embraced their feminine side and women who lean toward their masculine side, inspiring

the term two-spirit people. Two-spirit people were sometimes given special ceremonial roles because of their ability to go into both the masculine and feminine world, he said.

Direct Link: <http://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2015/04/06/ap-handful-of-holdout-tribes-dig-in-against-gay-marriage>

Native American comedy troupe takes no prisoners

Five comedians who make up The 1491s have the mandatory noble savage look, but laugh at those very stereotypes of Native American representation in American society.

By [Amira Hass](#) | Apr. 5, 2015 | 9:14 PM



Native American comedy troupe The 1491s at Vancouver art gallery before performance, February 21, 2013. Photo by US Embassy Canada

“Today we are going to party like it’s 1491,” says the man on the stage, and the audience laughs hysterically. “We’re not beating up on the whites here,” said Charlie Hill, the man who got onstage before him. “It’s not white-bashing what we are doing here, it’s just a spiritual spanking you should have gotten 400 years ago,” he continues, to the thunderous laughter of the audience, whose Native American features are caught by the cameras. The descendants of those who lived there before the white invasion in 1492.

This scene appears in a 2009 video clip with stand-up acts. (Hill, a Native American comedian, who succeeded in the land of the whites, died in December 2013.) The video crops up in cyberspace between newer videos by a troupe called The 1491s, which I first heard about at a lecture last month in North Carolina.

The 1491s are five men, members of the Dakota, Muscogee (Creek), Navajo, Osage and Seminole tribes. They laugh at themselves, and laugh at the whites and the stereotypes and representations of the Indians in American society, and at how in their own way Native Americans commercialize the offensive and flattening representations.

In their video clips their looks are veiled, the way a noble savage is supposed to look, and they growl and mumble and speak in slow and “spiritual” sentences, as expected of them. It is much funnier, of course, when you see it, for example, in the video clip “The Indian Store” on YouTube. An aging beatnik is looking for books about tribal legislation and sovereignty, while the two sellers, dressed up in noblesse-oblige ornamentation, offer him books on spirituality and Mother Earth. No, he wants a book about the rights of the Creek (tribe), for example, and no, that they don’t have, but they do have a book of native tales that teach you “how not to be.”

He continues to try; maybe they have one of the many books of the researcher of American policy towards the First Nations, Vine Deloria (a Sioux native), or something about the history of colonization; no, they have books about the language of the animals, and the latest edition of the book of photographs by Edward Curtis (which will be discussed below). There have been about 215,000 viewings of the video clip.

One of the members of The 1491s is named Ryan Red Corn, another is Dallas Goldtooth, who is also a social activist and one of the organizers of the huge Native American-ecological battle against the mega-project Keystone XL, which would produce oil from tar sands and transport it from Canada to refineries in Illinois and Texas.

Ryan Red Corn is tired of the automatic connection between Indians and seriousness. He created a four-minute film called “Smiling Indians,” because that’s what the Indians he knows do. One of the those most responsible for the stern-looking representation is photographer Curtis, who in the early 20th century photographed people from 80 different tribes, and whose serious, gloomy and miserable images left their mark on the collective image of the Native Americans.

Red Corn magnanimously dedicates the video clip to Curtis. But Adrienne Keene, who has a doctorate from Harvard’s School of Education and is a member of the Cherokee tribe, and who praises the video, is less forgiving. Five years ago Keene began to write a biting blog called “Native Appropriations,” focusing on stereotypes and the distortion of Native American cultural symbols. “Representations matter,” she declares in the heading of the blog, which so far has had over 100,000 “likes.”

Keene uses her blog not only to assist the growing opposition to the racist name of the football team from Washington, the “Redskins,” but also for a campaign against fashion designers, who copy or invent Indian motifs – while undermining their original significance. As a result of her blogs, there were some designers who apologized and have even begun to employ Native American designers.

In a lecture she gave 10 days ago at the University of North Carolina, she gave examples of the many cases of appropriation of Native American cultural symbols or Native American representations. She mentioned fireworks that are called the “Trail of Tears,” no less – after the death march of tens of thousands of Native Americans who were expelled by the United States government in the 1830s from their homes and land in the eastern United States to the west, in order to make territory available for whites.

One of the states from which they were expelled was North Carolina; one of the tribes that was expelled was the Cherokee, Keene’s tribe. One hundred seventy-five years later, she explained to nearly 200 fascinated students how the appropriation should not be considered a voluntary cultural exchange but rather a part of the mechanism of power, control and objectification.

In “The Indian Store,” The 1491s promise that the “dream catcher” – a popular item that translates faith into money – also improves reception on the Internet. And in fact the social networks turn out to

be a productive path of activity for the members of the 562 Native American nations registered in the United States. Search the Internet: There is also Project 562, which documents them one by one.

Direct Link: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/.premium-1.650629>

Brickell's Last Holdout Fights Developers to Preserve Native American History

By [Terence Cantarella](#)

Tuesday, April 7, 2015 | 2 days ago



Ishmael Bermudez (with his wife, Burke Keogh) has spent decades excavating what he believes are Native American artifacts in his backyard.

Photo by Marta Xochilt Perez

Just a few paces from busy Brickell Avenue, Ishmael Bermudez crouches behind his little clapboard house and drinks serenely from a hose lowered into the ancient bedrock. Skyscrapers drape his property in shadows. Across the street, a Metrorail train clamors to a stop at an elevated station. All around, construction cranes pirouette in the sky over the latest wave of megadevelopment.

At 65 years old, Ishmael is a sprightly, spirited man with a long black braid and a gift for understatement. Some people call him by his Native American name, Golden Eagle. Most people just call him Ishmael. Perpetually draped in dusty work clothes, he cuts a slight figure and speaks with a sing-song lilt. He's an amateur archaeologist, a preservationist, and among the longest-standing residents in this neighborhood of newcomers and runaway construction.

Now, as a new wave of foreign cash-fueled property speculation cranks land values back into the stratosphere, he's also turned into a real estate developer's worst nightmare.

"The developers don't have enough money to buy this place," he says, wiping his mouth on his sleeve and raising his voice to be heard over nearby construction and city traffic.

He gestures with a sweep of his hand across the yard. "This is one of the most interesting formations in the world. You're never going to see one like this again."

On his property sits a wooden, stone-chimneyed house built in the late 1800s by Bahamian laborers around the time of Miami's founding. A small rear addition was built in 1920. Bougainvillea, pines, and mango trees dot the perimeter, attracting flocks of chattering birds that make the property feel like an oasis. Yet the ground below is a barren moonscape of dark, prehistoric rock.

That's because 50 years ago, Ishmael began painstakingly removing all traces of soil, sand, and sediment from the ground — first with a shovel, then a spoon, then a brush. His efforts fully exposed all 5,000 square feet of the property's bedrock. And in those ancient pits, embedded in the rock itself, Ishmael claims to have found wonders: arrowheads, animal teeth, small artistic curios, empty clamshell piles, a long-fanged feline skull, a gold nugget.

The site's showpiece, though, is a freshwater spring Ishmael contends was used by Miami's vanished early inhabitants, the Tequesta Indians. Next to it, there's a shallow, manmade square cut into the limestone where Ishmael has found animal and human bones. He believes it must have been a ceremonial altar — perhaps even "the oldest altar in this part of the world," he says.

"There's a natural spring there, no doubt about it," says Jeff Ransom, Miami-Dade County's staff archaeologist. "But to say [there's] a Tequesta altar is kind of a stretch."

Last year, archaeologists made one of the discoveries of the century just a few miles from Ishmael's home: intact remains of a Native American village from around 500 A.D. Combined with the Miami Circle — a 2,000-year-old site discovered nearby in the late '90s — downtown Miami has become an unlikely hotbed for serious archaeology.

Ishmael believes his backyard belongs in the same breath as those finds. But professional archaeologists aren't so sure. "There's a natural spring there, no doubt about it," says Jeff Ransom, Miami-Dade County's staff archaeologist. "But to say [there's] a Tequesta altar is kind of a stretch."

Ishmael dismisses such snubs. And local Native American leaders say that his amateur archaeology illustrates an important larger truth. The Miami area was a Native settlement for millennia, and much of the city is still sacred ground. Anyone trying to preserve that history should be supported, they say — especially when that ground's real estate value keeps climbing.

With a nearby parcel recently selling for millions and Ishmael's own property value more than tripling in the past two years to more than \$1.8 million — not to mention the billion-dollar-plus Brickell City Center project rising just two blocks away — it's no surprise developers have been knocking on his door. But he says that unless his backyard finds are protected, he'll never sell.

"No matter how much they offer me," Ishmael says, "I won't sell. The only time I'll work with developers is when they come to me with a preservation plan where this site is part of whatever they're going to build."



Bermudez believes he discovered a Tequesta altar near a natural well outside his Brickell home.
Photo by Marta Xochilt Perez

The old, gold-toothed Comanche Indian woman peeked over Ishmael's fence and grinned. Her false teeth beamed under the summer sun. She was thin, with high cheekbones, and despite her 90-plus years, she still had long raven hair. She beckoned the 12-year-old Ishmael to the fence, then said: "Look under the house. Look for a cypress stump."

"Find the tree," Queenie told Ishmael, "and you'll find the water."

Her name was Queenie, and she lived in a nearby elderly care home. She'd heard about the 12-year-old Native kid who was turning up arrowheads and strange artifacts in his backyard. She came because her own parents had been forced out of Florida in the 1800s and resettled in Oklahoma, where she heard tales about an ancient spring back in South Florida. According to legend, it was marked by a tall cypress tree.

"Find the tree," Queenie told Ishmael, "and you'll find the water."

That fateful encounter, which came in 1962, would define Ishmael's life for decades to come and — in his telling — lead to a fateful discovery.

When Ishmael first arrived with his family from Colombia five years earlier, the denuded Brickell of today, with its glimmering towers and overflowing traffic, was unimaginable. Back then, the neighborhood was green and made up of pre-war bungalows and colorful, Mediterranean-style apartment buildings. Peacocks called to one another from the rooftops. Stately oaks and wild fruit trees grew in empty lots.

But the neighborhood didn't welcome the Bermudez family with open arms. The area was mostly middle-class white, while Ishmael's father was descended from Navajos and Pueblos and his mother was mestizo. With their tawny complexions, sketchy English, and the era's mounting ethnic tensions, the family was something of an outlier.

Still, Ishmael made friends and found a boyhood paradise in America. After school at Brickell's Southside Elementary, he and his buddies would carry their little sailboats to Biscayne Bay. They'd sail south to Vizcaya, sneak into the Venetian-style mansion, splash in the travertine fountains, and pluck lobsters from the shallow water along the seawall. Then they'd sail to one of the bay's tiny picnic islands and cook their catch on an open fire under the stars.

During shrimping season, Ishmael would tag along with shrimpers many nights and stumble home in the wee hours with buckets of fresh shrimp for his mother to cook. When he got bored with lobsters and shrimp, he'd head west to hang out or play soccer with Seminole Indians in the Everglades.

A few years later, Ishmael's parents decided to buy a house. Ethnic segregation was still common in Brickell, but a group of society ladies helped persuade a local bank manager to approve the Bermudezes' loan. The eight-member family — Mom, Dad, three boys, and three girls — moved out of a rental and into the home that Ishmael and his family would share for the next five decades near the corner of SW 11th Street and 1st Avenue.

Those well-intentioned women started Ishmael on his five-decade backyard odyssey. In 1962, the Soviet Union installed nuclear weapons outside Havana, prompting the Cuban missile crisis. Worried by the prospect, one of those women tasked Ishmael with finding a natural spring. Groundwater, she surmised, wouldn't be immediately affected by nuclear fallout if Miami were attacked.

Young Ishmael soon began digging up his backyard, searching in earnest for fresh water in the middle of Brickell. His mother thought he'd gone crazy. His two brothers resented not being able to play soccer there anymore. His father was just glad his son had a hobby and wasn't roaming the streets.

Just below the topsoil, young Ishmael made his first finds: artifacts and mysterious holes carved into the bedrock. When Queenie showed up one day with her tale of an ancient spring marked by a tall tree, he was inspired to keep looking.

So Ishmael squeezed into the crawlspace under his house with a flashlight and, to his astonishment, found himself staring at an old cypress stump, brittle and ax-scarred. The older half of the house, from the 1800s, had been built right over it.

Queenie became a regular at Ishmael's house after that. She would sit on the ground and chant in her native tongue as young Ishmael dug. Sometimes, she would dance around on the freshly uncovered limestone, her gold teeth shining as she sang, spurring him on to find the spring she was sure was nearby.

By the time he reached his late teens, he had managed to remove almost all of the property's soil to a landfill or piled it up along the perimeter in long levees. Yet, the legendary watering hole was still nowhere to be found.

Then one day in 1969, 19-year-old Ishmael was sitting on his back step during a summer storm, watching the rain fall on the martian landscape he'd excavated.

Suddenly, he noticed something odd about the stump of a large mango tree he and his father had cut down near an exposed pit he'd dug out. The rainwater, Ishmael saw, wasn't pooling in the deep pit but, rather, swirling around it and disappearing.

He grabbed a crowbar, went out in the rain, and pried the stump loose. When it finally budged, he lifted it up and saw a dead taproot disappearing into a hole. He yanked it out. All at once, cool, fresh water came rushing up from underground.

He had found his spring.

In that moment, everything made sense: a small, bone-filled square cut into the rock must have been an altar. The round holes near it were postholes that once supported a structure, like a chickee, over the altar and spring. A large cylindrical rock he found nearby had always mystified him. Now, he could see, the tapered end fit perfectly into the spring's opening. It was, he concluded, a "cork" carved specifically for that purpose.

Queenie, nearing 100 years old now, was overjoyed. She danced, held a special ceremony, showered Ishmael with blessings, and speculated on the spring's history. Before Natives fled to escape Spanish settlers, she theorized, they cut down the tall cypress tree to erase the spring's location marker. Then they laid aside the cork and planted a mango tree on top of the spring to hide the freshwater source.

Shortly after Ishmael found the spring, Queenie disappeared. The elderly home closed down, and the residents had to find new places to stay. Ishmael went looking for her, but no one knew where she'd gone.

"It's strange," Ishmael says. "She didn't say goodbye. Just vanished."



His excavation work now includes a site in Coconut Grove he contends includes more Native American relics.

Photo by Marta Xochilt Perez

Ishmael came and went from Brickell in the years after finding his spring. He was a hippie for a while, got a pilot's license, and worked as a ship joiner on cruise ships. During those seafaring years, he disembarked in whatever foreign port he found himself and sought out archaeological sites and indigenous people, hoping to gain insight into his find back in Miami.

He says he visited the Natives of Alaska, the Scandinavian tundra, the Mediterranean coast, and the pre-Columbian sites of the Caribbean. Sometimes, he scoured the countrysides looking for rock and fossil formations similar to what he had at home.

In the early 1970s, he traveled to Colombia to investigate his heritage. Shortly after arriving, though, he says the revolutionary guerrilla group FARC kidnapped him from a relative's farm, took him to a remote "hell place" in the mountains, and forced him to work manual labor for a year. He claims he escaped one night while they were drunk.

After that escape, he returned to Miami, worked in construction, got married, had three kids, got divorced, and kept digging. Using the skills he learned as a ship joiner, he decided to jack up his house the same way they jack up ships in dry dock. One wooden shim at a time, he raised his entire house an additional two feet off the ground and spent the next 13 years under the floorboards, excavating by lamplight.

He mostly kept quiet about his site because he wasn't sure if anyone outside the Native community would believe his tale. Still, it was hard to conceal such extensive excavations.

Parolees came to be spiritually cleansed. Sometimes, people tossed dead cats and rabbits over the fence. Someone once left a skinned goat in the alley behind the site.

In 1980, during the Mariel boatlift, thousands of Cuban refugees arrived and temporarily lived in a "tent city" under an Interstate 95 overpass, just three blocks west of Ishmael's

house. Word of the nearby spring reached the encampment. Refugees walked over at night, and Ishmael filled their buckets with water for drinking and bathing. Eventually, some of those same people started arriving with sick babies and ailing relatives, seeking to be cured by the "*indio*" and his sacred water.

The *Marielitos* weren't the only ones to venerate Ishmael's spring. A group of Haitians dropped off a set of wooden figurines to help protect Miami from storms. A man with knee trouble came looking for relief so he could pass the police academy's physical ability test. Parolees came to be spiritually cleansed. Sometimes, people tossed dead cats and rabbits over the fence. Someone once left a skinned goat in the alley behind the site. "Santeria," Ishmael explains.

People left other offerings too: money, skulls, diamonds, rubies, gold. A Native American named Condor dropped off a large crystal after it spent several years being carried around the world to various sacred sites, absorbing energy.

But what had Ishmael really found? In 1999, a startling find turned the world's attention to Brickell — and changed Ishmael's own thinking about the significance of his backyard.

Early that year, a developer had paid \$8.5 million for a decrepit Brickell apartment building and then torn it down to build a luxury high-rise. First, though, he had to allow city archaeologists to search the area. They found eye-opening evidence of ancient civilization: the Miami Circle, a roughly 2,000-year-old formation of holes cut into the bedrock near the mouth of the Miami River. The holes, which archaeologists now believe supported a Tequesta ceremonial structure, were the first discovery of their kind. And they lay just six blocks north of Ishmael's home.

In the weeks after the discovery, his home became a meeting point for tribal representatives from around the country who descended on Miami to rally for the circle's preservation. Ishmael let many of them stay with him. Together, they rallied every day at the site to save the circle. Ultimately, they succeeded, and the site is now preserved as a National Historic Landmark.

Ishmael met his current wife, Burke Keogh, at the demonstrations. Impressed with his enthusiasm for saving the circle, she accepted his invitation to see his own piece of Miami history. He showed her the spring and the altar, then convinced her to crawl under the house to see the cypress stump.

Down there, in the dusty darkness of the crawlspace, she decided he was the man for her. She told Ishmael her own story. She grew up in a Caucasian family in upstate New York, within earshot of Niagara Falls. Her grandfather and mother were environmentalists. In the 1970s, Miami lured her in with its aquatic charms.

"When I met Ishmael," she says, "I thought it would take two or three years of telling people about the site and there would be wild excitement that this is something new on

the planet that we can study and learn from. But a lot of people say, 'Why isn't National Geographic here? Where's the Discovery Channel? If this is really what you say, why don't I know about it already?'"

She believes the key to authenticating the site lies with the stone cork. She says she wants to get it carbon-dated. "We have three questions: What's it made of? How old is it? And is there another one like it in the world? But we don't have a lot of money to throw around, and it seems like nobody wants to get involved."

Ishmael shrugs at that suggestion. "Yeah, but that's just for the white world. I already know what's in here."



Ishmael Bermudez
Photo by Marta Xochilt Perez

Archaeologist Jeff Ransom was amid the horde of specialists excavating the Miami Circle back in 1999 when Ishmael approached him with his tale. He also told him about the manmade holes carved into the ground on his property that were strikingly similar to the ones Ransom himself was in the process of uncovering.

Ransom, a Venezuela native who today is Miami-Dade County's staff archaeologist, agreed to take a look. Sixteen years later, he still remembers what he saw. Or, rather, what he didn't see. There's no question that Ishmael had uncovered a natural freshwater spring in the middle of Brickell — but the archaeologist saw little to support his claims that artifacts nearby proved it was a Tequesta holy site.

"A natural spring," Ransom says, "is not uncommon really. You can find those in many places around downtown Miami and Brickell."

Ishmael's home, he explains, is located within a City of Miami Archaeological Conservation area, which means there's a high probability it could have been part of a

Tequesta site. But Ransom is skeptical of Ishmael's theories about a square altar cut into the bedrock nearby.

"Historically," he says, "there were a lot of things going on in that area. People were putting up fences, utility poles, things like that. So we find square holes in the rock all over downtown Miami."

One clue Ransom looks for is duricrust, a geological formation that grows on limestone at a measurable rate of around 1 millimeter per thousand years. If a stone cutting is old, it'll have plenty of the formation. "I remember seeing that cut" in the stone at Ishmael's house, Ransom says, "and it didn't have duricrust on it."

Ransom doesn't recall seeing the round holes near the altar either. "But limestone is porous," he says, "and round holes do occur naturally in limestone."

As for the stone cork, he says, "I've seen a lot of natural springs that are located in Tequesta sites. I've never seen one that's plugged."

But Ransom concedes that he paid only one brief visit to the site. And other experts are more sympathetic to Ishmael's view of his find.

Bob Carr held Jeff Ransom's job with the county for more than 20 years and played a pivotal role in the discovery of the Miami Circle. Today, he's the founder and executive director of the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the investigation and preservation of archaeological and historical sites across Florida and the Bahamas.

One day in the late 1990s, he happened to be walking by Ishmael's house and saw the excavation work. He stopped in for a chat and has been back several times since — never as a paid consultant, only as a visitor.

"I haven't studied the site closely," he says. "I would just say this: There are definitely manmade cut holes. They are old. How old they are, that would take additional research. I would have to look at the patina on the inside of the holes... I didn't analyze them carefully."

The spring, Carr says, could very well have been used by the Tequesta, although springs, he acknowledges, are common in that area. Ultimately, though, Carr says Ishmael is a positive force in a town that too often paves over its history: "His efforts really are a welcome contribution to preserving the past and creating a sense of Miami's history. It has merit. It has value. Even if the interpretations aren't proven scientifically."



Natural well outside Ishmael Bermudez's Brickell home.
Photo by Marta Xochilt Perez

There's one further complication to Ishmael's tale about a Tequesta well and altar. As he's told the tale through the years, it's grown in complexity and reach. Today, he'll tell any visitor who stops by about the Native American remains — as well as what he believes are prehistoric creatures and early human bones embedded in his property's bedrock.

Striding from rock to rock, sidestepping the holes, he matter-of-factly points out his discoveries to visitors. "That rock there, that's a 'dino' head," he says. "You see, this is the forehead. This is an eye. These are the nostrils. Some of these guys were over ten feet. And there are some that look like alien life forms.

"Over here are the humanoids, or whatever you want to call them," he continues, moving closer to the house and pointing to what look like common rocks. "That's a skull. A female. There's a whole bunch lying around. There, there, and there. Dead, dead, dead."

If Ishmael's Native American claims are in dispute, his ideas about fossils are downright dubious. Large numbers of prehistoric animal remains are rarely found concentrated in a small area. The human remains, meanwhile, would have to predate South Florida's earliest recorded human presence by at least 100,000 years. That's when the bedrock was formed. And South Florida was under water during that period.

But Ishmael says his beliefs are a combination of science and Native creationism. He believes that migrants from Asia populated the Americas some 15,000 years ago but also that other people were already here, that the Great Spirit put them here at the beginning of time. Native origin stories also tell of large, strange animals whose fossils have never been found and many cycles of destruction and creation over millions of years.

"The exploitation of Native people, the desecration of our sites, it's a continuous thing. Somebody has to stand up and say, 'Enough already!'"

His beliefs create a quandary for some supporters: Should ancient sites be preserved based on scientific evidence alone, or should Native American mythological and religious views about a site's significance be considered too?

Catherine "Hummingbird" Ramirez, who describes herself as a tribal queen of the Carib people and a shaman, believes it comes down to an issue of respect. She says Native culture and views are often trivialized.

"The exploitation of Native people, the desecration of our sites, it's a continuous thing," she says. "Somebody has to stand up and say, 'Enough already!'"

Even the Miami Circle has failed to earn local respect, she says. "No Trespassing" signs have disappeared, and residents use the circle as a dog run.

"The Miami Circle is sacred, a national historic landmark," she says. "In no other state will you see a sacred site treated like this. What I see in Miami is a lack of respect for American history."

She and other experts fear more of the same could come for Miami's more recent Native American discovery. Last year, archaeologists working on the site of another planned high-rise along the Miami River announced they'd found a full Tequesta village. "It's one of the earliest urban plans in eastern North America," Carr told the *Miami Herald* at the time. "You can actually see this extraordinary configuration of these buildings and structures."

But a developer plans to build a 34-story hotel and commercial development on the site. The city eventually hashed out a compromise to preserve part of the historic city, displaying it under glass in the new complex, to be called Met Square.

While politicians cheered that fusion of preservation and progress, Ramirez laments that much of the site will still be destroyed. "These sites need to have a voice," she says. "Somebody has to try hard to make people understand that we [Natives] didn't go away, that we still exist."

That's why Ramirez and others are so supportive of Ishmael. Even if his yard doesn't have the pedigree of the Miami Circle, they say, Miami should be going the extra mile to preserve sites with even the possibility of significant Native history.

Melvin John, a member of the Cree Nation of Canada who spends his winters in Miami, says he's visited Ishmael's site several times. "It's a historical site," he says. "How old? I don't know. But it doesn't diminish the fact that it was used prior to us being here, the city being here."

Local filmmaker Dara Friedman documented Ishmael's story in a short film presented during Art Basel last December. She says the most remarkable part of the tale has been Ishmael's dedication.

"He's made a commitment and really stays true to it," she says. "It's noble... Because that's a lot of temptation that I don't know who else could resist."



Ishmael Bermudez holds up items he's dug up around his Brickell home.
Photo by Marta Xochilt Perez

On a recent Sunday, Ishmael hunches over an open pit in his yard, bucket and brush in hand. His wife is at his side. Skyscrapers hem them in on three sides.

There's nothing left to excavate, but keeping the site free of leaves and sediment is never-ending work. Ishmael also keeps busy with excavations in other parts of town. He recently completed a dig in Coconut Grove on a site he believes may have been a stopover point for Indians following the southern migration of large game.

Now and then, Ishmael holds full-moon and equinox ceremonies at his site. He removes the stone cork from the spring and lets the water flood the backyard, filling the pits with water from the underlying aquifer. There's a lot of drumming and chanting, and a bonfire illuminates the scene. Residents in a nearby condo tower often call the police. But the cops know him. They come over, tell him to keep it down, and sometimes ask for a tour before leaving.

But lately, he's been getting other visitors too. Developers have been knocking on his door with extravagant offers for years. In the past few months, though, their visits have become more frequent.

And no wonder. Last year, the average sale price per square foot of land in Brickell was \$461, according to industry specialists. At that rate, Ishmael's 5,000-square-foot property could fetch some \$2.3 million. Due to a dwindling supply and high demand, however, he could easily get much more, especially since his property sits directly across the street from Metrorail's Brickell station — a major selling point to transit-minded buyers.

The speculators' offers, he insists, don't impress him. If he sells, he wants to see the site preserved within whatever new development rises on the spot. Until he gets such an agreement, he'll continue to price his property out of buyers' reach.

"They might be millionaires and billionaires," he says, "but when I tell them how much this costs, they freak out. They say everything is by square foot, and I say, 'No, maybe in your world, but not in this world. You're going to buy a prehistoric site, a part of American history, a landmark in Miami... Do you have \$150 million for it, sir?'"

"There's only one of me against a whole bunch of destructive people. They'd sell their mother, they'd sell their father, they'd sell their wife and everything down the river so they can look good."

Some developers, he says, have resorted to dirty tricks to get him to move. One, he says, brought over a city building inspector, hoping the house would be declared unsafe; Ishmael says it passed the inspection, and no liens are currently filed against his property.

He says the same developer convinced the City's Solid Waste Department not to pick up his garbage for three months. He also believes nearby developers use their money and influence to discourage media coverage, explaining why his site hasn't gotten the same attention as the Miami Circle or the Miami River discovery.

"There's only one of me against a whole bunch of destructive people," he says. "They're so involved with what they got. They need a lot of money to survive. They'd sell their mother, they'd sell their father, they'd sell their wife and everything down the river so they can look good."

Max Puyanic, an attorney and real estate investor, owns the property next to Ishmael's. He currently leases it to a 7-Eleven convenience store. He says he'd like to purchase Ishmael's land. Without Ishmael's parcel and the one directly behind it, attracting a large-scale developer to the site would be difficult.

"I have an interest in purchasing his property," Puyanic says, "and I'm sure other people do too... But [Ishmael] is seemingly stuck in a belief pattern regarding what the property is all about and what it's valued for. It's more than I can deal with. I'm interested in a more normal approach."

The idea of preserving Ishmael's site within a new development doesn't appeal to him. "I suppose anybody can contract anything, but that would not be an interesting prospect for me... That's not where I'm at. It's a nice location, and I think if he were more rational in his approach, then something could happen. But I can envision many years going by with nothing transpiring."

Until his 92-year-old father, who lives in the house, passes away, Ishmael says he won't even consider selling. Even then, he's in no hurry to leave. Besides, he says, he has a different philosophy of ownership. "For some reason, I was supposed to uncover this so I

can teach others about it," he says. "Right now, this place belongs to the world. All I do is take care of it... It's yours. It's ours. I never say it's mine."

Setting aside his bucket and brush, Ishmael sits quietly next to his spring. He carefully plucks a bee off a nearby rock, places it on his fingertip, and lets it sting him. "They're my medicine," he says. "I've been digging a lot and hurting, so I use them. They heal the muscles, the joints. That's a Native American secret for many, many moons."

Surveying his site, he suddenly grows stern. "When it comes to something like this, it's serious. This is a landmark. The roots of Miami, part of an ancient city. My job is to preserve it, to show it to people. You find something as unique as this and they want to destroy it?"

He releases the bee, smiles as he watches it fly away, and says, "I'm not going to let that happen."

Direct Link: <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/brickells-last-holdout-fights-developers-to-preserve-native-american-history-7563834>

A Native American Festival in Phoenix

By [Matt Beardmore](#)

April 7, 2015 12:21 pm April 7, 2015 12:21 pm



Petroglyphs at the Deer Valley preserve. Credit Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve

Arizona State University's [Center for Archaeology and Society: Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve](#) in Phoenix is hosting a free festival showcasing Native American art and performances on April 11 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

“ ‘Native Now’ is really important because we’re celebrating contemporary people living in the city that are holding on to pieces of their heritage,” said Kate Oltersdorf, research assistant at the Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve. “A lot of these performances will be

songs that are talking about contemporary issues. It's a good way to talk about these issues and better understand each other."

Visitors can also survey the more than 1,500 petroglyphs on the 47-acre preserve. Petroglyphs, Ms. Oltersdorf said, are rock carvings that are up to 5,000 years old and made by many tribes and cultures, with the three main cultures responsible for them being the Archaic, Hohokam and Patayan. It's uncertain what they represent, though, as some have interpreted the carvings as a deer clan or a successful hunting party, or they could have been visions by someone in a trance.

"There really is no right answer," Ms. Oltersdorf said.

Direct Link: http://intransit.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/04/07/a-native-american-festival-in-phoenix/?_r=0

Is a PA Farmer Digging Up a Native American Burial Mound?

[ICTMN Staff](#)

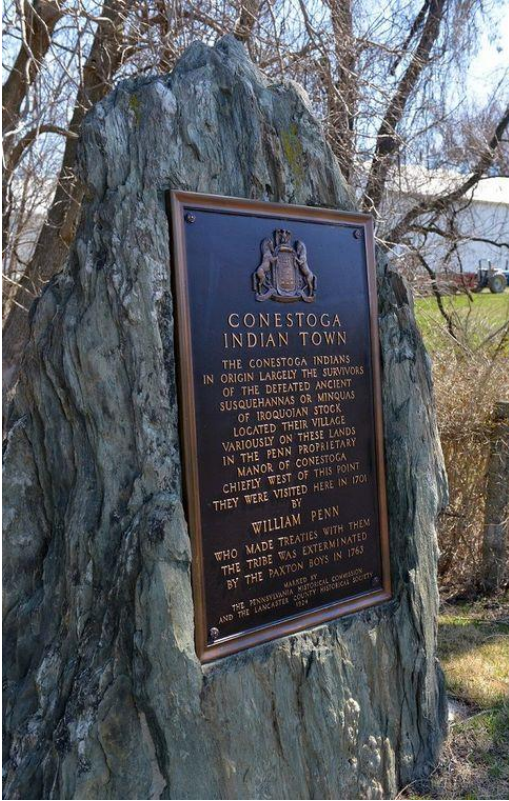
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Activists thought they were victorious and done protecting Conestoga Indian Town in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, when they stopped a natural gas pipeline from being built through it. But now, a local farmer has taken a bulldozer to a hill on his property, which some historians and Native activists believe is a Native American burial mound, reports [LancasterOnline](#).

"We fought the pipeline but now it's turning into this, and we're all sitting back wondering what to do," David Jones, who has done work documenting Native American sites in the area, told LancasterOnline.

The farmer, Donny Witmer, is clearing the area to plant grass and produce hay, and may have the law on his side.

Even though Conestoga Indian Town—which may be on Witmer's land—is registered with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, "It's (Witmer's) property and he's doing it with private funds, so he can do whatever he wants, whether it's recorded or not," Howard Pollman, the commission's director of external affairs, told LancasterOnline.



This Conestoga Indian Town marker is near the site where Witmer is bulldozing.

Activists and historians feel that the history is not something that can be replaced and want Witmer to stop.

“There would be a huge outcry if someone were to bulldoze the pyramids, but this is kind of the same thing,” Darwin Martin, an amateur historian who has written several books about local history.

There is still debate over whether the hill on Witmer’s land is a burial mound or not though. Martin told LancasterOnline that there is “pretty strong evidence” that it was. He pointed to 1714 records that show Conestoga Chief Togodhessah, or Chief Civility, telling state government leaders that “our old queen,” Conguegos, was buried there. Martin also said the chief is thought to be buried there, but there isn’t any hard evidence of that.

Witmer disagrees: “It’s way too rocky to bury anyone up there,” Witmer, who also said he’s never heard anyone refer to the mound as “Chief’s Hill” until recently, told LancasterOnline. “My grandmother was born” there, he said. “No one called it that.”

According to LancasterOnline, activists will try to use the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act to get Witmer to stop work on the mound, but it may not apply to private land, or citizens. The [NAGPRA website](#) says it applies to federal agencies, and public and private museums that have received federal funds. The site also

says that "if the burial ground is not on Federal or tribal land, then the excavation and inadvertent discovery provisions of NAGPRA do not apply."

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/08/pa-farmer-digging-native-american-burial-mound-159921>